ASPECTS OF THE URBAN HISTORY, SOCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL OF DACCA CITY, 1921 - 1947

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Abstract

The thesis focusses on Dacca through a western institution - Dacca Municipality - during 1921 - 1947. Run along authoritarian lines by British District Magistrates from 1864 - 1884, it was taken over by Indians in November 1884 when it acquired its first non-official, Indian and elected chairman. As in other Indian cities, however, it proved difficult to reconcile this over-regulated, semi-democratic body, designed to improve the welfare of the multitude, with the limited aspirations of the Indian elites who sat on it, struggling to preserve their social, political and economic interests. The working of the Municipality also exposed a conflict between the liberal, reforming drive of some individuals and the traditionalism of the majority. Financial constraints, war and communal riots, among other factors, were further impediments on the path of municipal growth. Nevertheless, the Municipality achieved some substantial modernization of Dacca's amenities by installing water-works, electricity and underground sewerage.

The first chapter describes the physical city and its people - their occupations and communal distribution. Chapter 2 concentrates on the services provided by Dacca Municipality. Chapter 3 investigates its financial administration, with particular concern for the Municipality's indebtedness and inability to balance its accounts. Chapter 4 looks at the Municipality's politics, which were personalized and often unconnected with civic improvements.

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Appendices

Select Glossary

Anna	Food or rice
Ashraf	Aristocratic class
Bhadralok	Educated Bengali elite
Bhisti	Indian professional water carrier
Bustee	Slum
Char/chur	Island or sandbank
Chaukidar	Night watchman
Diwan	Provincial revenue officer under the Mughals
Hartal	Strike
Hati kheda	Indian method of capturing wild elephants through the use of tame ones
Jamadar	Head sweeper or latrine cleaner
Kacha	Made of earth, impermanent
Khal	Canal
Kotwal	Mughal officer in charge of civic amenities in a city
Kutti	Indigenous Muslims of Dacca city, with a dialect of their own
Langar khana	Free kitchen (gruel kitchen)
Madrassah	Muslim religious educational institution
Maktab	Originally Persian school - later, Muslim educational institution at primary level
Methor	Sweeper or latrine cleaner
Methrani	Sweeperess or female latrine cleaner
Pakka	Made of brick or concrete, permanent
Panchayat	Council of local notables or elders
Patshala	Privately managed vernacular educational institution at primary level
Peon	Footman
Pul	Bridge
Sarai	Guest house
Sarkar	Municipal tax collector
Swaraj	Independence
Tahsildar	Municipal tax collector (sarkar)
Tikka gari	Hackney carriage
Zamindar	Landlord

Abbreviations

A.A.R.D.M.	Annual Administration Report of the Municipality of Dacca
B.A.R.	Annual Administration Report of the Government of Bengal
B.E.D.M.	Budget Estimates of the Dacca Municipality
B.L.A.P.	Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings
B.L.S.P.	Bengal Local Self-Government Proceedings
B.M.P.	Bengal Municipal Proceedings
B.S.B.R.	Annual Report of the Sanitary Board, Bengal
B.P.H.R.	Annual Report of the Directctor of Public Health, Bengal
B.P.I.R.	Report on Public Instruction in Bengal
B.Q.R.	Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in Bengal
C.M.G.	Calcutta Municipal Gazette
D.A.W.	Addresses of Welcome given by Dacca Municipality
D.M.P.	Proceedings of the Municipality of Dacca
D.M.R.	Dacca Municipality Records , Collection No. XXV
D.U.A.R.	Annual Administration Report of Dacca University
D.U.C.A.	Dacca University Convocation Addrress
I.A.R.	Indian Annual Register
S.I.R.D.	Sanitary Inspection Report of Dacca Municipality
T.I.D.	Thacker's Indian Directory

Introduction

Dacca is an old city with many phases of glory and humiliation in its past. Under Hindu, Buddhist and Afghan sultans and chiefs, it was a district market town, given an added importance by the exceptional quality of the cotton grown in certain limited areas to the north of the city. Its greatness as a city dates, however, from the seventeenth century and its choice by the Mughals as the capital of Bengal. The fillip thus given to its trade and industry was followed by the arrival of European merchants who purchased the fine cotton textiles in increasing quantities. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the city lost much of its administrative importance when Murshidabad became the Mughal provincial capital - though Dacca still remained the sub-capital of Eastern Bengal. But it was not until the latter part of the century that the centralizing policy of the new East India Company Government and a decline in the European demand for Dacca cottons really brought the city low.

At no point, however, was it reduced, as Murshidabad was, to the position of merely a district headquarters town. Handloom weaving survived, though only the coarser cloths were produced, and by slow increments the city's regional administrative functions were restored. Together with its port-town, Narayanganj, it took an important part in the mid-nineteenth century growth of the jute industry, and in the trade in grains and hides. It also established itself as the major educational centre for Eastern Bengal, a focus for intellectual life and for political and social reform movements. By the twentieth century, Dacca was the obvious choice for capital when a new province, of Eastern Bengal and Assam, was created in 1905. The rapid growth which followed was stunted by the undoing of the Partition of Bengal in 1911, but not reversed, while the city's educational importance was much enhanced by the establishment of a University in Dacca in 1921. Independence and the

creation of Pakistan in 1947 restored Dacca to the status of provincial capital and war in 1971 led to its emergence as national capital of independent Bangladesh.

Several of the phases in the history of Dacca city have been the subject of scholarly study. Mughal Dacca necessarily figured in the History of Bengal edited by Jadunath Sarkar, and Abdul Karim has produced a useful, if lop-sided, monograph, Dacca the Mughal Capital. Dacca's cotton industry has recently been discussed in its wider context by K.N. Chaudhuri in The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660 - 1760. A thesis on its period of decline, by Mrs Ajuman Ara Chaudhury, is currently nearing completion and there is a very full account of its slow revival, administrative and economic, in Sharif Uddin Ahmed's thesis, 'The History of the City of Dacca, c. 1840 - 1885.' The politics of Partition, 1905 - 1911, have frequently been discussed, while for its ecomomic impact there is M.K.U. Molla's thesis, 'The New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905 - 1911.' The life of the city in the years after the First World War and up to 1947 have, however, remained curiously neglected. These years have sometimes been thought of as years of a 'big sleep,' a period of torpor after the excitements of 1905 - 1911, broken only at the very end by communal violence and the inrush of Muslim refugees and exodus of Hindus from 1947 onwards. But asleep Dacca certainly was not. Although its municipal area increased only marginally, its population expanded rapidly during this period.[1] The process of modernizing its civic administration and services, begun in the late nineteenth

century, continued, with occasional flourishes of activity.

In studying this period of the city's history, politics have not been my major concern, partly because so little of the material essential for a serious study is available in Britain, partly because it would not be possible to prevent a study of politicians with a base in Dacca from becoming a study of the politics of Bengal as a whole. Instead, I have tried to look at the city of Dacca through the Municipality. Focussing upon this western institution and upon the way it was used means that this thesis is a study of the city's elite, to the exclusion of other elements in the life of the city. Such a limitation permits a greater unity of approach; if it succeeds in stimulating others to use it as a basis for broader research, so much the better.

A complete list of the primary sources used is to be found in the bibliography. The bulk of my research in Britain was conducted in the India Office Library abd Records. Here is to be found much official material produced by the Government of Bengal, particularly Administration and Public Health Reports and Municipal and Local Self-Government Proceedings. Unfortunately, it has hardly any

provincial records later than 1936, although Bengal Legislative Council and Assembly debates are available up to 1945. Thacker's Indian Directory and local Gazetteers of the period permit the building up of an outline sketch of Dacca's trade, commerce and administration.

What is missing in the India Office Library is detailed material relating to Dacca city itself, especially contemporary maps and proceedings and reports of the Dacca Municipality. The Newspaper Libraries at Bush House and Colindale have national Indian newspapers for the period, but these had little to say about mofussil towns like Dacca. I had hoped to find material on town planning in Dacca at the Town Planning Centre, London, since Patrick Geddes produced a long report on the city in 1917, but I drew a blank there and at the Public Record Office. Neither have any material on Dacca during this period.

This gap could only be filled by a visit to Dacca, where I was able to spend six months on fieldwork in 1976 - 1977. The most valuable source was the Dacca Municipality record room. All the material was catalogued, though the files were not well preserved because of the lack of funds for conservation. A number of files were missing, notably those relating to the various sub-committees and their reports, as were some files of proceedings and several budgets and Annual Administration Reports, but a fair proportion of these main sources happily had survived and were still available in the Municipality. (They had been weeded out of the Dacca Secretariat record room long ago.) In addition, a few maps of the city from before the First World War had survived in the Municipality record room, though they were about to be thrown away because of their worm-eaten condition. The crowded record room of the Dacca Municipality had no research facilities in the normal sense of the term, being a service adjunct to a very busy administration. I was the more grateful, therefore, for having been allotted working space and allowed to interrupt the office routine with my requests for material. And the very room,

with its clerks and a steady flow of people coming and going - seeking the dates of birth or death of relations, renewing licences for rickshaws and scooters, paying long-standing municipal taxes or complaining about them - was an education in the art, or craft, of local administration. Considering that the Municipality's record room is the only repository for substantial records on the civic body, the early municipal records should be organized and recatalogued, the maps and bundles should be restored and safeguarded and perhaps current weeding practices should be brought under scholarly review.

Other valuable sources in Dacca were found in the University's manuscript and microfilm library, which had the private papers of two municipal commissioners of my period - with another set discovered in the course of my research - and also in Dacca University's main library, which had a full run of the extremely useful vernacular newspaper, Dhaka Prokash, which is stored in well preserved volumes covering the period 1863 to 1959. Other useful local periodicals and magazines are kept at the Bangla Academy. Thakbast surveys and district settlement reports are preserved in the Collectorate, while the Settlement Office had details on land prices and transfers. The Land Revenue Department generously provided me with six enormous survey maps of Dacca city, prepared during 1912 - 1915. These maps were the largest and most detailed available for my period, none seemingly having been produced by the Dacca Development Trust in the period to 1947, though the Centre for Urban Studies in Dacca did provide a few partial maps of the city, indicating land use.

From 1976, Dr. Abdul Karim had begun to organize the transfer of departmental and district records to the Bangladesh National Archives. Unfortunately, as a result of periodic weeding, the Government of Bengal's 'B' proceedings and the District Magistrates' and Divisional Commissioners'

reports of the pre-1947 era have almost all been destroyed. The political chaos in 1971 surrounding the creation of Bangladesh also led to the loss of much material. Both the 'A' and 'B' proceedings of all departments of the Government of Bengal are catalogued, with some gaps, from 1902 onwards, but unfortunately the catalogues are not accurate guides to the material actually preserved. I was able to find only two files of detailed reports on municipal administration by two British District Magistrates of Dacca during the period.

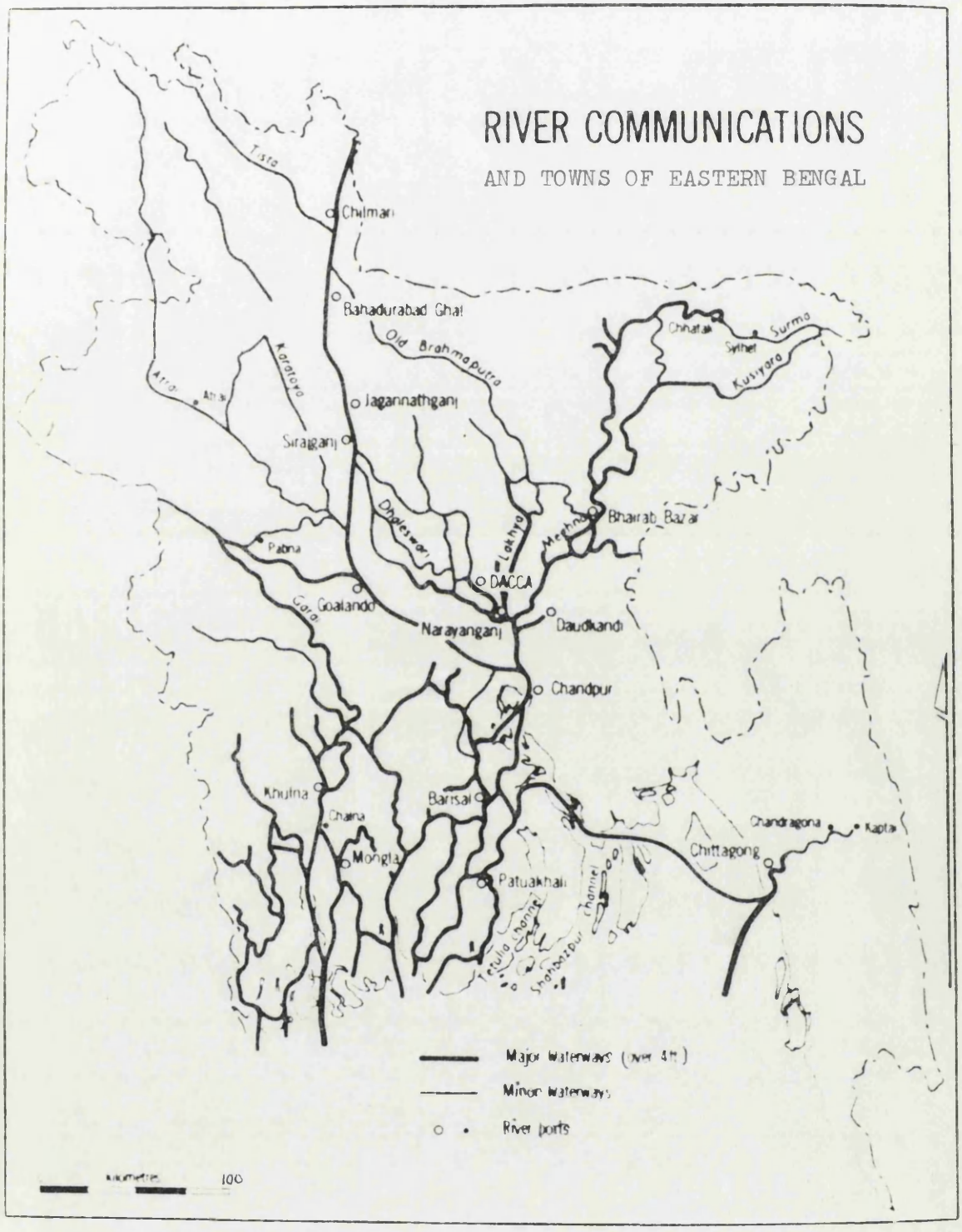
Non-official sources only partially made good deficiencies in the official record. Northbrook Hall Library and the District Bar Library both proved disappointing. The former had no useful material on Dacca during the period, while the latter would not admit to having any pre-1947 papers available for the use of visitors. Interviews with a cross-section of people who had lived in Dacca during the period were, however, immensely interesting and rewarding.

I am indebted to many people who gave me of their time and wisdom, and to many institutions in Britain and Bangladesh which gave me access to their records and holdings. I am deeply indebted to three men in particular - Dr. Sirajul Islam who introduced me to the field of research in 1973, Mr J.B. Harrison who suggested Dacca city to me as a subject for research and supervised my thesis with enormous patience, and Dr. David Cheesman, my husband, who has shared all my tensions as a researcher voluntarily since 1979. I would also like to thank the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Central Research Fund of London University and the University of Dacca, which by giving me financial assistance and study leave made the thesis possible.

Notes and References

1. See Appendix 1 for the diagram of changes in the population of Bengal at each census, 1872 - 1931; see also the table below, p. 26.

MAP 1



Source: J.B. Harrison, History Department, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Dacca and its people, 1921-1947

Like all the old cities of India, Dacca is both monstrous and marvellous. It is the capital of present-day Bangladesh, born as recently as 1971. But it has a past that stretches back far beyond 1608 - the year of the arrival of Islam Khan who made Dacca the Mughal capital in Bengal.[1] In its physical layout, Dacca still bears traces of its history, as a trading and manufacturing centre or as an administrative capital or sub-capital, while details of house style testify to the influence of Hindu, Muslim and British rulers.

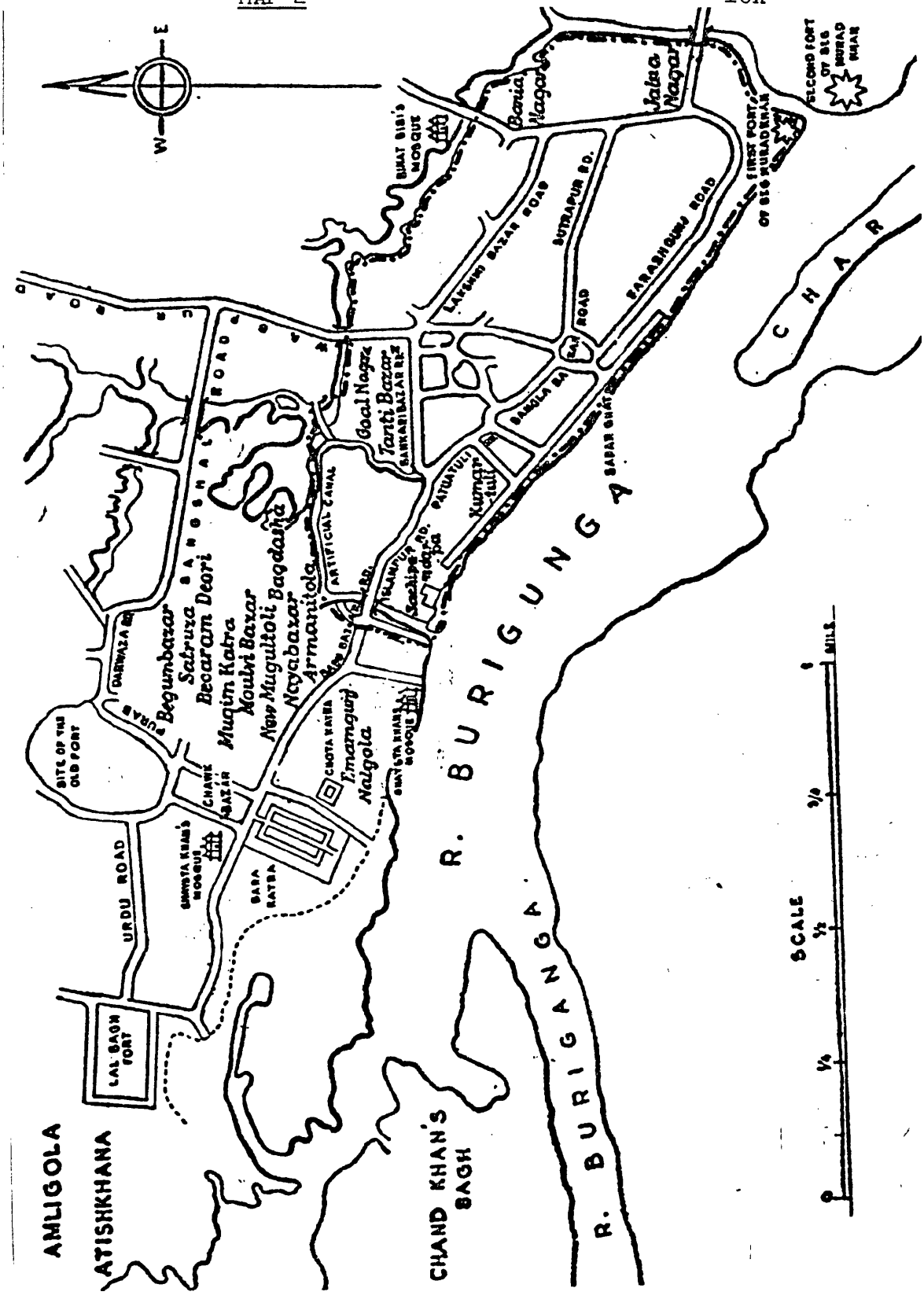
Dacca is located in the large Gangetic and Brahmaputric plain of Eastern Bengal, a land of majestic rivers and lush green tropical vegetation, and grew up when the rivers were still the major channels of communications. The city stands on the high northern bank of the Buriganga[1A] - a twenty six mile off-shoot of the much bigger Dhaleswari river. The latter is of great economic importance to the city and district since it connects with the Jumna, a branch of the Ganges, in Western Bengal, but also by the Padma is linked with the Brahmaputra in Eastern Bengal.[2]

The major rivers of this part of the sub-continent have such forceful tides and carry so much silt and sand that they frequently form chars (islands) of different sizes and durations while indiscriminately swallowing up villages and towns on either bank. These rivers are so hyper-active that sometimes they throw up islands in the morning only to wash them away in the evening.[3] But Dacca city, though linked to the Ganges and Brahmaputra, was situated at a reasonably safe distance from the much dreaded mouths of the Ganges a hundred miles towards the south, and from the main stream of the Padma.[4]

The city's position on a stable bluff of high ground kept it relatively free from floods and other natural calamities.[5] The rains virtually never fail in the district and consequently serious crop failures and food shortages are rare. The climate is moderate in comparison with upper India. Despite the high humidity, the East and the South Easterly winds blow almost steadily from the end of April to October. These cool winds, which the District Gazetteer called one of the most attractive features of Dacca's climate, must have added an additional value to the river frontage sites exposed to the welcome rainy season wind.[6]

Because of the wish to capture the breeze in the hot seasons and because Dacca depended so much on river transport, the city formed a ribbon along the Buriganga - much longer than it was deep. Of this ribbon the south-east end is the oldest, marked out by the place names as being Hindu in origin. This Hindu section occupies the half-moon between the river and the Dolai Khal or canal. The main settlements were Patuatuli, Kumartuli, Jaluan-agar, Banianagar and Goalnagar; and these, as A.H. Dani and S.M. Taifoor argue, accommodated the Hindu craftsmen and businessmen of the city. The names of the principal markets (Lakshmi Bazar, Bangla Bazar, Shankhari Bazar and Tanti Bazar)[7] certainly support the argument.

The city achieved an additional importance when in 1608 Islam Khan, the Mughal Subahdar of Bengal, transferred his capital from Rajmahal to Dacca. The consolidation of Mughal control over Eastern Bengal encouraged the growth of trade with Dacca from the main seaports of Bengal and thence to the Mughal north, while the choice of Dacca as capital led to the expansion of the city to cope with the provincial bureaucracy and the requirements of a court at which the landed interests of the province were represented. The military function of Dacca as a base of operations against recalcitrant pirates of Arakan added a further dimension to the life of the town, commemorated in the forts which dominate



PRE-BRITISH DACCA: HINDU AND MUGHAL

Pre-Mughal Dacca is in the half moon in the east.

Source: Dani.

the Mughal quarters upstream of the older Hindu city.

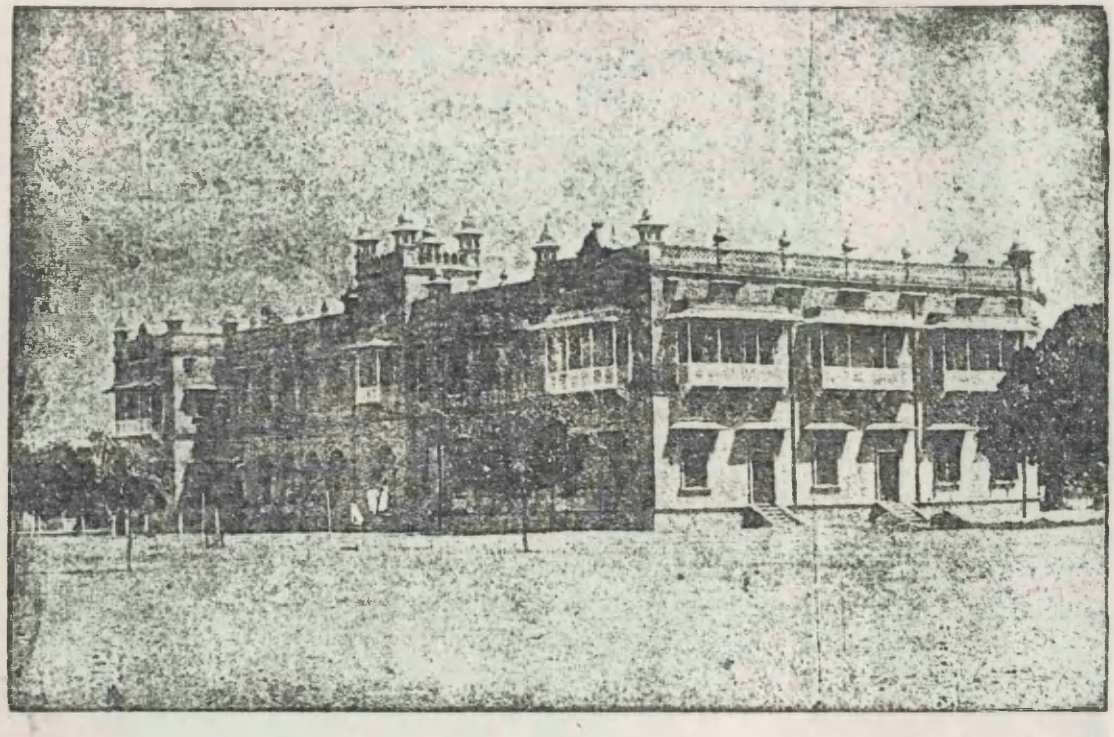
On the basis of the accounts of foreign travellers like Mannuci (who visited Dacca in 1663), Tavernier (1665), Thomas Bowrey (1669-79) and James Taylor (1840), the maximum limits of Mughal Dacca can be fixed at the river Buriganga in the South, Tongi in the north, Jafarabad-Mirpur in the west and Postagola (Pist-i-Qila) in the east.[8] This was a vast area comprising rather more than forty square miles, but it probably included much garden and cultivated land.[9]

Islam Khan reconstructed the old Afghan fort, located to the west of the pre-Mughal city, on the site of which the present central jail stands. An artificial canal was dug between the Buriganga river and the western branch of the Dolai Khal which was perhaps a river at that time. This was a strategic measure adopted to safeguard Mughal headquarters from insurrection. The places near the Subahdar's headquarters are assumed to have accommodated the government officials. Such names as Bakhshi Bazar and Diwan Bazar point directly to this, as do those of Mahoot-tuli and Peelkhanna, the quarters of the elephant keepers and of the elephants and other baggage animals. The Chauk Bazar, still the main bazar, served as a more general market. The Mughal nobles also built their palaces along the river in the neighbourhood of the fort, the seat of the Subahdar and the area most secure from river borne attack.[10] The Mughal troops seem to have been quartered in Mirpur, Khilgaon, Kawran (Karwan), Kakrail and what later became the Plassey Barracks.[11]

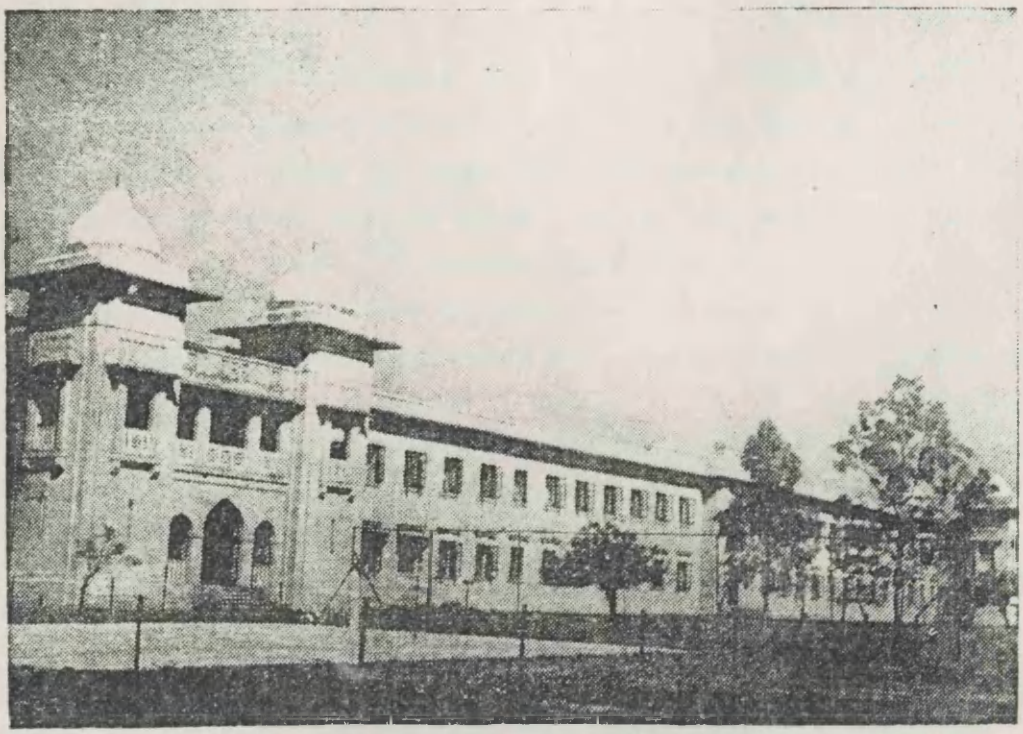
Dacca's expansion and development was halted when the capital of Mughal Bengal was transferred to Murshidabad in 1717. When the British administration took over in 1765, the city had already shrunk from the maximum limits earlier recorded, and the new administration added little to the existing structure.[12] Rennel's map of 1780 shows large areas as under trees and gardens - though whether this had or had not always been so is difficult to decide - while the river frontage was by

then only some four miles long.[13] By 1824, when the city had been overshadowed by the rise of Calcutta as the main administrative, military and commercial base of the East India Company in Bengal, the decay of Dacca was much clearer. Bishop Heber described the city as merely the wreck of its ancient grandeur - having two thirds of its vast area filled with ruins and jungle.[14] But by then Dacca had in fact already started a slow recovery in answer to development within the British administrative system. Under various Collectors or District Magistrates Dacca's roads and bridges were gradually repaired, jungles were cleared, and when the Municipality came into existence in 1864 the recovery became more continuous. The important physical developments of the city during the British period in the nineteenth century were the laying out of the race course in the Ramna area in 1825, the development of Nawabpur - Johnson Road and the shifting of the administrative headquarters from the old fort to this area in 1870, and the construction of the East Bengal Railway which linked Dacca with Narayanganj in 1885 and with Mymensingh in 1886.[15]

The localities of Wari and Gandaria on the north-east and eastern side of the city were also developed in the nineteenth century as residential areas, together with Topkhana, Purana Paltan and Naya Paltan, associated with the British military establishment.[16] Most of the development in the nineteenth century, though, took place near the river. The eastern and northern parts of the city did also begin to develop, however, because of their relative openness. The rail links with Narayanganj, the jute trading centre, to the east, and Mymensingh to the north also served to accentuate the shift away from the western, Mughal end of the city, which had already been initiated by a change in the main course of the Buriganga. This movement, north and east, continued with the proliferation of new forms of transport - bicycle and car, and in more recent times cycle-rickshaw , bus and scooter .[17] The railway lines formed a distinct boundary between the old



Curzon Hall (1904)



Salimullah Muslim Hall (1929)

Source: Dani.

Dacca and the new northern Dacca which grew up in the twentieth century.

Considerable construction took place in the northern part in the wake of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and during Dacca's short span of life as a provincial capital between 1905 and 1911. The massive new Secretariat, Government House and Curzon Hall grew in the green fields of Ramna 'at the dictation of the British Government'.[18] Curzon Hall, the earliest of the new British cluster of buildings, was meant to be a town hall but in practice was used partly for various government offices and partly as the Dacca College after the annulment of the Partition of Bengal. In 1921, Dacca University took it over and used it as its Science Faculty, examination halls and also as the Convocation Hall till 1947.[19] This massive red brick building is still a landmark of the Ramna area in Dacca. It must have looked even more spectacular in its early days in the open fields of Ramna; one admirer was even moved to verse in 1911:

> Where once the owl did hoot
> The Jackal yell,
> In thickets dwarf and tall,
> There stands today, in state
> A sentinel -
> The splendid Curzon Hall.[20]

A number of western-style residential bungalows with spacious compounds grew up along the new straight roads - Minto Road, Bayley Road and Hare Road, all within walking distance of the Race Course. This formally planned Ramna area, already well supplied with trees and gardens, became a much praised model. 'It is said', notes Rudduck 'that a land-scape gardener was brought out from Kew Gardens to advise on the work'.[21] This part of Dacca had another spell of growth from 1920 when the construction of more such bungalows was started for the Vice-Chancellor, professors, the Registrar, and deans of the University.[22] A visitor described the area in 1923:

'Ramna, the suburb of Dacca in which the University is situated is a veritable garden city ... As I motored through it on my way from the railway station to the Vice-Chancellor's bungalow, I found myself in a well planned town, traversed by good roads lined with trees and hedges. Handsome residences, set in large compounds, were half hidden by masses of greenery. This beautiful, salubrious suburb measuring nearly a square mile in area, and practically all the houses upon it, had been handed over to the Dacca University. Few universities started, in modern times, with a healthier site or more magnificent buildings'.[23]

The area was further developed when the University was started in 1921 and Students' Halls were opened. The largest of these was the new Salimullah Muslim Hall, the foundation of which was laid in 1929.[24] The large buildings of the University and its 450 acres of green fields with students playing football, cricket, tennis, hockey and other European games, was on a much bigger scale than before and [25] created a new image of Dacca. This University was an added element that distinguished this growing westernized part from the old and in many ways traditional part of the city.

The poet Rabindranath Tagore, while visiting Dacca in 1926, was so impressed with the vast openness of Ramna against the backdrop of the oppressive narrow insanitary lanes and the congestion of old Dacca that he suggested to Dr. Rameshchandra Majumdar, Professor of History at Dacca University, that Ramna be named '<u>Khola</u>'(meaning open) in contrast to <u>Dhaka</u> (meaning closed) which he thought was the most befitting name for the old part of the city.[26]

Although in the twentieth century it was the northern part of the city which was taking a distinctly British shape, the older part of the city was not altogether devoid of British influence. Since the Dacca District administrative headquarters had always remained near

Nawabpur - Johnson Road and Victoria Park, the short-lived establishment of a provincial administration in the Ramna area did little to impair the importance of the old government offices. Although the majority of British officials moved into new bungalows in the Ramna Civil Lines in 1905, their old houses on the river front still proclaim their British origins. A traveller approaching Dacca from the west, during the period under review, would have noticed at least some British features. Most of the western and middle section of the eastern side of the city still gave a strong impression of the Hindu and Mughal past, but the water-works, Water-works Road, Mitford Road heralding the Mitford Hospital, the steamer station, the Northbrook Hall,[27] and a few European-style houses - some of which had previously been occupied by the Commissioner, the Collector and the Civil Surgeon - could all be called British. A number of streets bearing the names of British officials also were strong reminders of British influence in the old part of Dacca.[28] The eastern part of the river bank was dominated by Ruplal House and Raghulal House - the stately homes of the Hindu merchant-bankers, Ruplal Das and Raghulal Das. Towards the west of Northbrook Hall was Ahsan Manzil, the massive palatial home of the Dacca Nawabs. These various imposing European-style houses built in the nineteenth century were interspersed with thatched huts, crowded markets and pakka-houses of modest appearance.[29] Generally speaking, the east-west axis of the main road running for about two miles parallel to the river Buriganga was mainly Indian in character.

The north-south axis, which was a new and British feature, was also about the same length. It ran from the Buckland Bund in Sadarghat, 'a fine establishment' situated on the river bank in the south, towards the railway, Government House and the race-course in the north, the southern and northern parts of the road being known as Johnson Road, after a British Collector, and Nawabpur Road, after the old Mughal locality respectively. The road was marked by the Eden Girls' School, the Baptist

Mission Church, the Bank of Bengal, a cluster of schools and colleges, (e.g. Pogose School, Collegiate School, the Normal School, Jagannath College), and then, in formal well-spaced sequence, the Munsif's Court, the Judge's Court, the Registration Office, the Collectorate Office and the Magistrate's Court, with Victoria Park to mark the approximate crossing point of the two axial roads. The scale of the building, and even more of the walled compounds in which they stood, presented an exaggerated contrast with the crowded houses and shops of the Shankhari Bazar just to the west. The abandoned sepoy lines, the race course and the Dacca Club standing at the other end marked this axis off as British and distinct from the indigenous one.[30]

The residential houses of Ramna 'had the best available contemporary living facilities'.[31] Like the Mughal buildings, they were built with red bricks forming what Bradley-Birt described as the modern and handsome twentieth century purple palaces of the Public Works which sprang up in strange contrast with 'the graceful domes and minarets of the mosques and palaces of a bygone age'.[32] As in Ramna, the model suburb of Wari and the affluent part of Gandaria and Purana Paltan also contained residential houses. Their large compounds and high surrounding walls gave them privacy, while their ample windows provided fresh air as well as light. These houses, stucco rather than red brick, were a mixture of Mughal and European architecture in style, but not in their functioning.[33]

Great contrasts existed in the housing conditions of Dacca's people. The poor lived in thatched houses which were no better than those Tavernier had seen in Mughal Dacca in the seventeenth century, which he described as, 'properly speaking, only miserable huts made of bamboo and mud'. Manerique, similarly found the huts plastered with cowdung, and noted that a few straw mats and a few earthen pots constituted the only furniture.[34] Some three hundred years later Dacca still has slums like

these, only perhaps on a larger scale. Despite the famous town planner Professor Patrick Geddes' sympathetic suggestions in 1917 for at least beautifying the surroundings of depressed areas by planting trees around them, British Bacca's slums remained no less miserable than those of Mughal Dacca.[35] Some houses were also made of corrugated iron with kacha or pakka plinths, depending on the wealth of the occupiers.

There was one curious type of house in Shankhari Bazar, where the conch-shell cutters lived, which seems to have been peculiar to Dacca. These houses were described by the District Gazetteer in 1912 as follows:

'the houses here have a very narrow frontage with a quite disproportionate depth. The most extreme instance of a characteristic which is common in a greater or less degree to all the houses in this bazar is to be found in a well built masonry dwelling which in 1909 was inhabited by a family of eight persons. This extraordinary structure had a depth of 55½ feet and a uniform breadth of 3 feet 4 inches only. Another curious house is 60 feet deep, 27 feet high and only 6 feet wide. These houses are well built and kept in excellent repair but very little light or air can penetrate into the curious little cave-like chambers of which they are composed.'[36] This pattern of houses was completely indigenous and exceptional even within the city.[37] But the houses in congested business-cum-residential areas like Shankhari Bazar and Tanti Bazar had the common features of narrow street frontages (narrow because of the high cost of land and the need for shop outlets on the road) and very long buildings running back from the shop fronts. The other lower middle class houses, usually two storied and flat roofed, stood shoulder to shoulder on both sides of narrow brick built lanes often not wide enough for modern vehicles. These houses hardly had any backyard or courtyard, the roofs being the only open space for the inmates' evening taking of the air.[38]

The houses of the middle and upper class people were

often furnished in traditional ways. But the use of European-style furniture like chairs and tables in the sitting rooms was not uncommon during the period under review.[39] The houses of the opulent were lavishly decorated both during the Mughal as well as the British period. Tapan Raychaudhuri, drawing on contemporary accounts, paints spectacular pictures of the houses of the Muslim gentry and of the wealthy Hindus in Bengal under the Mughals. Many Mughal officials had beautiful gardens, green arbours and even covered walks, while bathing pools and fish ponds were common. The Muslim houses were big and spacious with beautiful apartments and halls, many were flat/roofed, the upper terrace being a favourite place for catching the cooling breezes. The audience halls were lavishly furnished in wealthy Muslim houses with expensive cushions and Persian carpets.[40] Hindu houses were also sumptuously decorated as the scene in a wealthy Vaishnava's sitting or reception room makes clear:

'The master of the house sat on a costly bedstead richly decorated with brass plates and covered with beautiful awnings. A bed with fine covers and silk pillows was spread on it and several waterjugs, big and small, and a brass betel-pot were at hand, while two servants stood waving fans made of peacock's feather.'[41]

The descriptions here quoted are not explicitly of Dacca, but relate to areas of East Bengal not far removed, and there is evidence that in the early years of Mughal occupation their officials lived in tents, or in elegant buildings of bamboo and grass which would have a life of not more than some fifteen years.[42] Of Islam Khan, the first Subahdar at Dacca, it is recorded that he never erected any permanent palace for himself but lived in a barge near Chandnighat on the Buriganga. Mughal building in more permanent fashion therefore only began after their occupation of the city had become firmly rooted. Indeed some Mughal buildings were extremely lavish. Bishop Heber, who visited Dacca in 1824, has left a description of Nimtoli Palace, where the powerless Nawab Shamsuddawla lived

on a meagre allowance provided by the British. Heber admired the handsome gateways of the palace, while the well-ventilated reception hall seemed 'extremely respectable and noble manly' to him, its walls decorated with mirrors and portraits of the Nawab and his late brother and furnished with a large round table surrounded by mahogany chairs. He was less impressed with the low residential buildings which he could see inside the compound, conceding merely that they were not 'inelegant'. Although a pensioner of the British, the Nawab still maintained the appearance of a Mughal noble, dressed in fine muslin clothes, with a gold tassel in his turban and his fingers glittering with 'splendid diamond rings'.[43] Wealthy Hindus in Mughal Dacca also lived in luxury. Hindu buildings in Dacca of pre-Mughal and early Mughal days did not survive till the period under review, except for a few imposing temples such as Jai Kali Mandir in Thatari Bazar, Dhakeswari Mandir near Ramna area and the Shivbari or Kalibari near the Ramna race course.[44]

The wealthy people of Dacca under the British also lavishly furnished their reception rooms mainly in the European fashion. Ahsan Manzil and thegarden houses of the Dacca Nawabs in Shahbagh and Dil Khushbagh (commonly known as Dil Khusha), Ruplal House of the wealthy Das family in Sabjimahal, the huge garden house of the 'intellectual zamindar' of Baldha in Wari with a permanent stage and hosts of actors and actresses were noticeable not only for the European influence in their structures but in their furnishing and content also.[45]

Behind Dacca's physical expansion, lay, naturally, the growth of its population which started in the nineteenth century when the administration was stabilized under the British. Despite Dacca's much talked of decline in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Bishop Heber noted in 1824 that there were still some 300,000 Hindus and Muslims living in 90,000 houses of Dacca though in the absence of any formal census to confirm them, these seem too large figures to be accepted without dispute.[46] In the first formal census, of 1872, the population figure

for Dacca city was recorded as 69,212. This was, however, the population within the municipal area of six square miles which was much smaller than the area described by Heber and other foreign travellers.[47] The following table will show the decennial growth of population in Dacca city from the first formal census up to the last in the period under review:[48]

1872 - 1941

Year	Population
1872	69,000
1881	79,000
1891	82,000
1901	90,000
1911	109,000
1921	119,000
1931	139,000
1941	213,000

Dacca city attracted more people when it acquired the status of a provincial capital. The increase in population during 1901-1911 was as much as 21 per cent.[49] This dramatic growth was, however, shortlived. The marked fall in 1911 - 1921 was caused by the annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1911, followed by the dreadful influenza of 1918-1919.[50]

The censuses of 1931 and 1941 recorded 15.2 per cent and 54 per cent growth rates in the city population. The latter figure seems to have been inflated by both Hindus and Muslims who accused one another of deliberately exaggerating their number for political purposes.[51] But the fact remains that the city population had been increasing steadily, all seven municipal wards sharing in this growth.[52]

It was in the old town, hemmed in between the river to the south and the railway line to the north, that the overwhelming majority of the Indian population lived and worked. The densest settlement was along the bank of the Buriganga river and the main road running parallel to it, at a distance of two to three hundred yards, where many of the houses, close packed, were three stories high. Wards

5, 2, 1, 4, 7 and 3 were, in that order, the densest of the city, and all of these included portions of this old river-based settlement though they also extended northwards into the less closely packed areas. Ward 6 marked the other end of the spectrum, being the least heavily populated and lacking any section of the congested part of the city.[53]

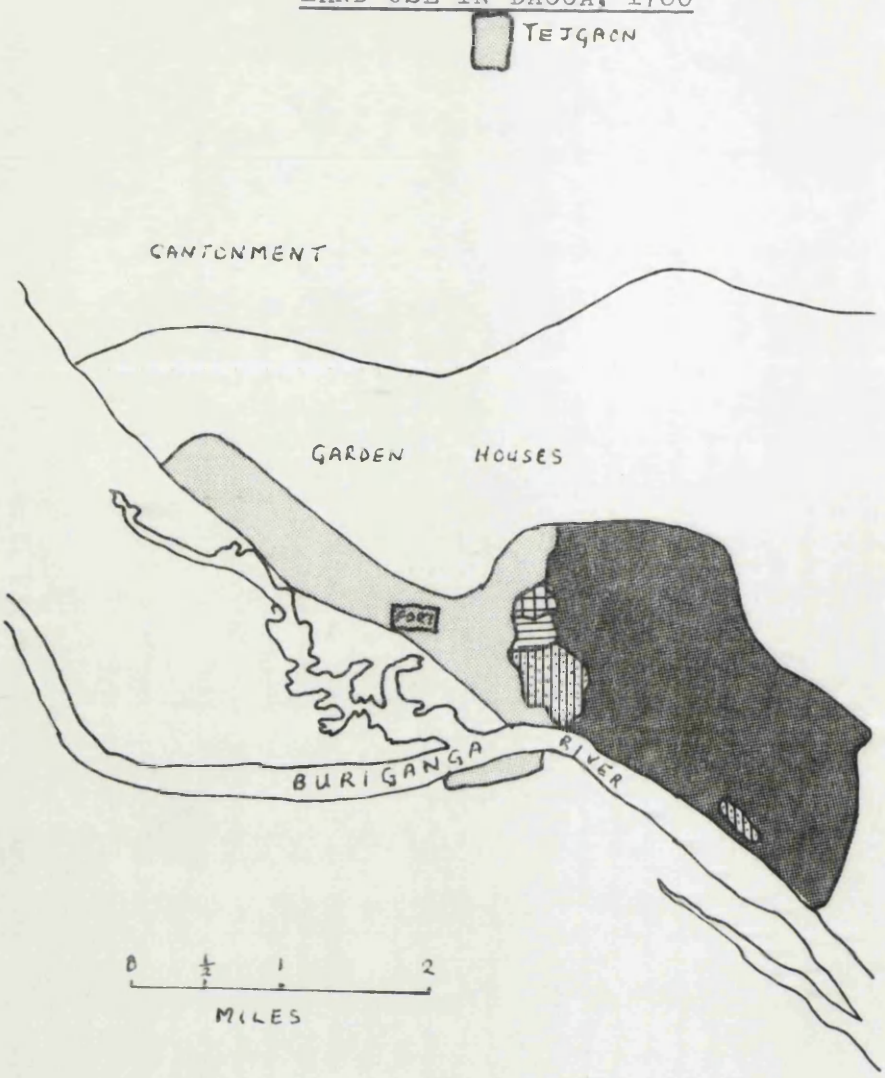
Three of the most densely populated wards were in the heart of the town near the business centres on Nawabpur-Johnson Road. The shopkeepers lived, as in mediaeval Europe, on the premises. The whole of the central wards are typical, in their dense development, of the pedestrian city with businessmen, their clerks and their porters all within walking distance of their place of work. The hackney carriage was still the commonest form of transport, and a slow one, in this period, with the bicycle as individual supplement. Living near the business centre saved people both time and money. The pattern is seemingly as typical of the Muslims as the Hindu-dominated wards.[54]

Nawabpur was the main retail trade centre in the city. As the connecting link between the old and the new parts of Dacca, it attracted more trade than Chauk which had been the main business district of the Mughals. During the period under review Chauk turned increasingly into a wholesale centre for rice, mustard oil, pulses, fuel, coal, betel leaf, betel nut, tobacco and so on. As the city expanded towards the east and north, the retail trade also moved eastwards along Islampur Road and then northwards along Nawabpur Road. Bangla Bazar being in the centre of the old town, not only continued but even improved as a business centre during the later part of the British period.[55]

Apart from the main trading areas like Nawabpur-Johnson Road, Chauk, Islampur (Waterworks Road) and Bangla Bazar, areas like Gandaria and Armanitola had also acquired trading, commercial or industrial character in the

MAP 3

LAND USE IN DACCA, 1700



Key for Maps 3, 4 and 5

High class residential areas

Middle class residential areas

Low class residential areas

Wholesale shopping areas

Retail shopping areas

Administrative areas

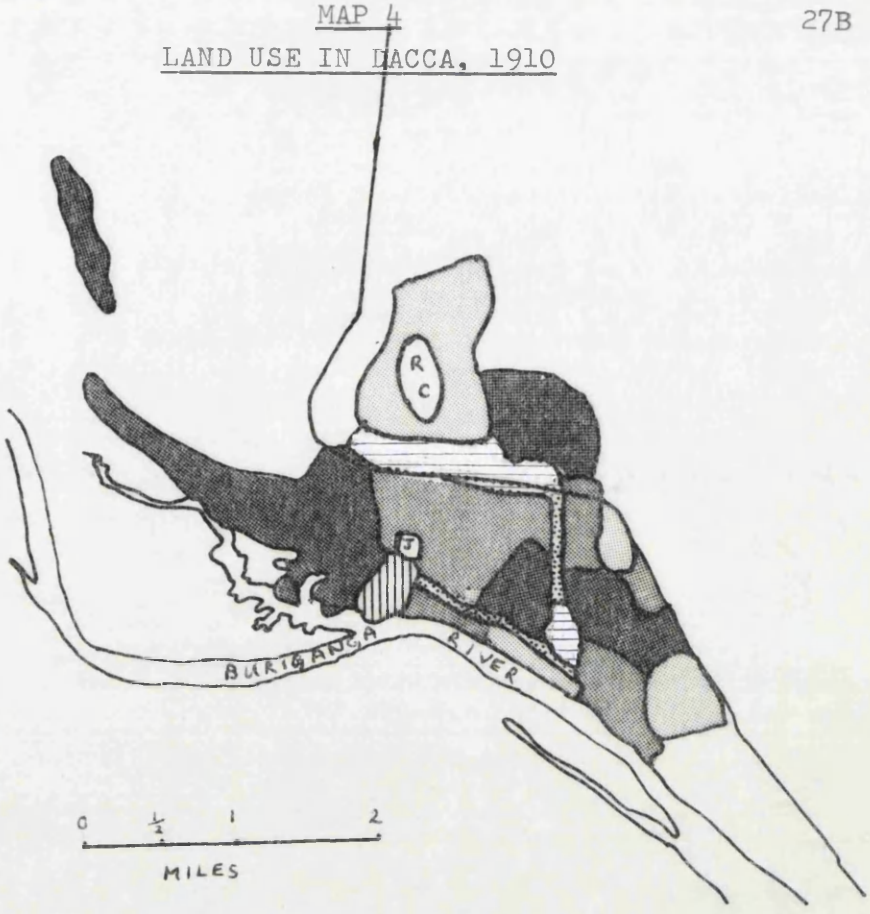
Military headquarters

R C Race Course

Source for Maps 3, 4 and 5: Adapted from F.Karim Khan and Nazrul Islam in The Oriental Geographer, vol. VIII, no. 1, 1964.

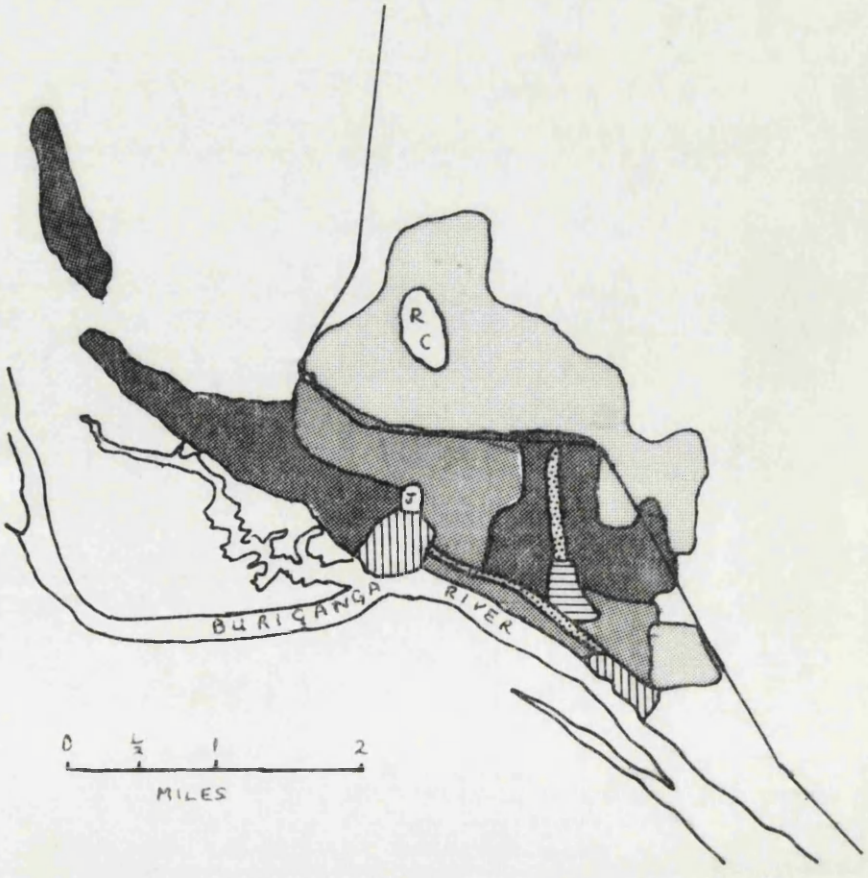
MAP 4

LAND USE IN DACCA, 1910



MAP 5

LAND USE IN DACCA, 1945



old part of Dacca and some areas expanded their trade and business. Thus, by the time our period started, Ampatti, Lalbagh, Sutrapur and Farashganj, the traditional timber yards of the city, had also cloth and stationery shops and even Wari, the fashionable residential area, had acquired an industrial look with the establishment of textile firms, printing presses and shops in the neighbourhood. New industries and markets gradually started swallowing up more residential quarters. Sadhana Ausadhalaya-an Ayurvedic pharmaceutical industry-and a toilet soap factory established in Gandaria and Hordeo glass factory in Hat Khola[56] added new dimensions to these areas. The small Lakshmi Bazar also turned into a bustling market. A number of grain, fish, meat and vegetable markets started in the nineteenth and early twentieth century continued to cater for the urban population throughout the period. All of these were in the old town. The latest market to open - the first proper municipal market in Dacca-was the Yousuff Market established in 1913.[57]

Trade and commerce, with the banking associated with an old capital, were the main economic functions of Dacca city. In these fields Hindus were the dominant element. Thus the traders in jute, rice and oil were mainly of the Basak sub-caste, which was also dominant as metal button manufacturers, book sellers and publishers. They owned a number of cloth and stationery shops on the Nawabpur Road,[58] the main middle class shopping centre and in Patuatuly which was traditionally the business area of the Basak weavers of Dacca.[59] Like the Basaks, a number of Dases - belonging to another Hindu sub-caste, were also engaged in the jute business.[60] But unlike them, the Dases were, in addition, horn and mother of pearl button manufacturers and dealers in photographic material, crushed food and forage.[61] They were also engaged in printing and publishing, hardware and timber business and money lending. They were concentrated in Nawabpur Road and Walter Road for retail business and in Faridabad, Chauk Bazar, Ampatti and Lalbagh for wholesale trading.[62]

The Roys were also big names in trade and commerce in the city. They owned two newspapers, The East and the Dacca Gazette.[63] They were also hardware merchants. The Bengal Zamindary and Banking Company, dealing with loans, banking, management, land development and agency business, was jointly owned and run by Roys and Dases, with Gangulys, Pakrashis and Mukherjees as partners. This firm was again strategically located on Johnson Road - the southern part of Nawabpur Road.[64] The Roys' other business concerns were situated in Armanitola and Mughaltuli, further west in the old city.[65] Sahas were also members of the commercial elite in Dacca. They were druggists, cloth merchants, dealers in coal, paint, varnish, colours, machinery, hardware and spices. Their shops were located mainly in Babu Bazar on Water-works Road and in Islampur. They were also engaged in the printing and publishing business.[66] There were also Mukherjees, Ghoses, Kundus and Banerjees among the merchants and traders in Dacca.

If the trade and commerce of the city were largely in Hindu hands so were the major industries. Textile firms such as Gupta and Company Hosiery Works at Patuatuli, Das and Brothers at Farashganj, Dey Sarkar and Company at Wari and Basu Rai Chaudhury and Company in Faridabad were all owned by Hindus.[67] The Boolbool Soap factory, the first toilet soap factory in Dacca, was also started by a Hindu. It was located in Gandaria, though this was a residential area.[68] More surprisingly Babu Sachindra Nath Ghose, a Calcutta graduate, started a tannery works in the city and a shoemakers' colony in the Lakshmi Bazar area. A number of shoemakers were already living there - all of them Hindus - and more came thereafter to concentrate on this area, a good example of the way persons of similar craft and religion cluster in one place.[69] The major factory industries of Dacca like the Madan Mohon Iron Works,[70] the Desha Bandhu Sugar Mills, the East Bengal Sugar Mills, the Prasanna Match Factory, the Hardeo Glass Works, the Dhakeswari Glass Factory, the Boses' Glass Works, the Alexandra Steam Machine Press, the Narayan Marine Press, the Wari

Printing Works, the Bijaya Press and the Provincial Press were again all owned by Hindus. Most of the owners of these industries lived in Dal Bazar,[71] Naya Bazar and Tanti Bazar.[72] That these rich Hindus continued to live in these congested parts of the city and showed no interest in Wari or other more modern and comfortable areas suggests the existence of a strong force of cultural tradition and social habit in some sections of the population.

Among the Muslims, by contrast, there were hardly any industrial entrepreneurs. The Nawabs of Dacca owned a small ice factory in Kamartuli, though this was working at a loss because of the greater popularity of David and Company's ice factory in Narayanganj.[73] Muslims also owned the Islamia Press and the oldest brick factory in the city, that of Julfikar and Company.[74]

There were more than 7,000 industrial workers in the city;[75] they constituted roughly five per cent of the city's total population. The majority of them was Hindu, most of them living in the areas nearest to the factories, and so within walking distance, or in one case living in workers' barracks attached to the mill.[76]

Although some large scale factory industries had been introduced in the city, the bulk of the manufacture was still in the hands of industrial craftsmen and artisans whose homes were residences-cum-workshops. A large number of people was thus engaged in weaving, in the conch-shell industries, horn-carving, gold and silver work, soap manufacturing, leather, bamboo and cane work, the making of fishing nets and the production of caps, brass and bell metal products and pottery in the mahallas in which they lived.

Dacca's distinctive industries, cotton spinning and bleaching, the weaving of muslin, Jamdani, and embroidery, were exclusively confined to the homes of the industrial

artisans and their families. Although Dacca's famous fine muslin industry had almost died in the nineteenth century, in handloom manufacture the city remained one of the principal centres of the Province till the first quarter of the twentieth century.[77] During the Swadeshi movement (1905-11) and World War I, local products became more popular than before. Although Dacca's textile and hosiery mill products had to face tough competition from those of the Calcutta and Bombay mills, its cottage industries still had their assured place in the city. The Jamdani, Dacca's distincitive cotton handloom sari, is still a favourite among Bengali women both in Bangladesh and in India. This quality product, was not in direct competition with mass-produced cloth and so demand remained constant - among those who could afford it. As the other cotton handloom products were cheaper than machine-made garments, they maintained their popularity with the poorer classes in the city and neighbouring districts. Sales of dhotis, lungis and gamchas, therefore, also held up in the face of competition from the mills.[78] The Tanti Bazar, Bhiti Azimpur and Nawabpur areas traditionally accommodated most of the city's weavers. The cotton weavers were locally known as Tanties, Jugis and Jolahas, and of these only a small minority, the Jolahas, were Muslims.

Next to weaving, conch-shell cutting was the most important industry in Dacca. This was an old industry 'with its roots and tentacles dug deep into the social and domestic life of the Bengal people'.[79] Its close connection with Hindu religion, sentiment and practice kept the industry alive. The people engaged in this industry were all Hindus. The workers were locally called 'Shankharis' and lived in the heart of the city, in 'Shankhari Patti' or Shankhari Bazar', the colony or market of the conch-shell goods manufacturers. They typically combined their residence and workshop in the same place.

In the horn carving and country soap manufacturing

industries, the artisans were all Muslims. The workers in the former industry used to manufacture horn combs, buttons, toys and knife blades. They lived mainly on the river front at Amligola, Churihatta and in the Nawabganj area[80] west of the Mughal Lalbagh. About where the soap makers lived and worked, however, there is some doubt. The District Gazetter of 1969 states that they lived mainly in Farashganj and Faridabad.[81] C.M. Islam says that they were from Narinda, Babu Bazar and Imanganj.[82] However, while Babu Bazar and Imanganj were Muslim majority areas in this period, located near the river, with two markets of their own and the city map of 1912-15 shows considerable areas of poor thatched housing in these areas, Narinda was a much richer area, of pakka housing, in which no thatched houses are shown at all. Narinda, therefore, does not seem a likely centre for such a trade and for such poor people. Of Faridabad and Farashganj, the former was a very sparsely populated area. For a particularly smelly, unpleasant industry like soap boiling this might seem appropriate, though Farashganj seems to be a still more likely place with several bazars or markets around this Muslim majority area. One of the reasons why these industries did not attract the Hindus doubtless was because animal fat was commonly used as an ingredient of the country soaps.[83] However, we should not stretch the factor of religion too far when all the shoemakers of Lakshmi Bazar were reported to be Hindus. There was of course some difference between the raw materials used by the Hindu shoemakers and the Muslim shoemakers of Dacca. The former group only used chrome leather imported from Calcutta, whereas the Muslim Chamars and Rishis (the shoemakers' local names) used local leather.[84]

Another occupational group concentrating in a particular locality was the carpenters, locally called 'Mistris' or 'Sutradhars', who lived mainly in the Farashganj areas and near the Sutrapur market. These places were along the Dolai Khal, and it was probably for the easy supply by water of the raw materials that this

location had been chosen.[85]

Patuatuli and Kumertuli were yet other examples of localities dominated by one occupational group, in this case Hindu Kumars or potters. They used to make earthen statues of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses and also earthenware jars and pots for day-to-day use.[86]

Thathari Bazar, Kanshari Bazar, Nawabpur and Islampur were known for brass, copper and other metal wares. The artisans were locally known as 'Kansharis'. Except for Islampur these areas were predominantly Hindu.

Gold and silver work was a well-known craft in Dacca. The gold and silversmiths were mainly the descendants of the muslin weavers who, after the decline of the muslin industry, took up such work and excelled in this field also.[87] There were 548 males and seven females recorded as engaged in the jewellery and ornament making industries in the city in 1931.[88] A large majority of them were Hindus, mainly concentrated in the Tanti Bazar, Nawabpur and Islampur areas.

Tailoring and bookbinding were the main trades taken up by the Muslims. Their workshops were mainly in Bangla Bazar, Sadarghat and Nawabpur - strategically placed for contacting customers in the old city, the civil station and the university-though with scattered representation throughout the seven wards of the Municipality. Their residences do not seem, however, to have been located in any one particular area. The same may well have been true of the drivers of the hackney carriages and carts, who were nearly all Muslims. But if it is a fact, as some people are strongly inclined to believe, that they were mostly drawn from the Kuttis, the native Bengali Muslim labouring class, then of course their concentration can easily be located in Lalbagh, Rahmatganj, Chauk Bazar area, Siccatuli, Mughaltuli, Bangshal and Maisundi .[89]

Clearly there were also large numbers of people engaged in such occupations as milk production, boat building, oil pressing, poultry rearing, the making of bidis (country cigarettes) and the manufacture of cane and bamboo baskets, mats and furniture, just as there were publishers and book-sellers, stationers, musical instrument makers, and so on. They might be of either community and were not grouped spatially in one particular quarter, but with barbers, washermen, domestic servants and the like were found everywhere in the city.[90]

Among the very low income groups the scavengers and sweepers, who were regarded as untouchables by the caste Hindus, lived in groups on the periphery of the city.[91]

On the lowest rung of society were the beggars, vagrants, prostitutes and their procurers. In 1911 a total number of 12,844 such people was recorded in the census in the district of Dacca.[92] In 1921 the district is reported to have contained 18,299 beggars, vagrants and prostitutes, but between 1921-31 their number declined to 9,610.[93] The census reports cannot claim accuracy with regard to the numbers of these people; nevertheless they were there, an integral part of Dacca as of all Indian cities. The beggars and vagrants lived where ever they could find an open verandah or other shelter, but they plied their trade, as might be expected, at shops, the railway and steamer stations and ferry ghats, near mosques, temples, mazars (graves of Muslim saints), on the streets near markets and by the main public offices. They used to make their characteristic appearance in large numbers, during such Hindu and Muslim festivals as Janmastami, Durgapuja, Muharram, Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha (Bakr Id). But if the beggars were virtually everywhere in the city, the prostitutes were concentrated in the Badamtoli area very near Ahsan Manzil, the palace of the Dacca Nawabs. About the religion of these classes no data is provided by the sources: Muslims commonly held, however, that most of the prostitutes and procurers were Hindus and so were the beggars.[94]

Since Dacca was a capital or a sub-capital for Bengal the other major groups of occupations were the administrative and professional, though those who served government or entered the professions, the (western) educated, were often rent-receivers also, and formed the bhadralok.[95]

Lawyers formed one of the major professional groups in the educated middle class of the city. In the province as a whole the number of people engaged in the legal profession was very large compared to that of the other provinces of India. This profession flourished in Dacca, there being no dearth of civil and criminal cases in that region. It appears that 'everything that could be litigated about was eagerly litigated by these people.'[96]

Before the First World War the number of lawyers in Dacca was still quite modest, in the absence of a High Court - 128 in 1905 and 144 in 1911, at which latter date the census recorded a total of 1,464 persons engaged in the legal profession including Kazis, mukhtyars, clerks and petition writers. By 1921, despite the undoing of Partition, there were as many as 267 pleaders listed by Thacker's Directory for Dacca, and that number continued to rise, despite the slump, in the next decade and by 1940-41 Thacker could list 321 pleaders in the city. It should be noted that it is only in the last years of our period that any significant Muslim presence at the Dacca Bar can be seen. In 1921 as in 1905 there were only two Muslim pleaders, but in 1940-41 their number had risen to 19.[97]

One reason for the steady inter-war growth in the number of lawyers in Dacca was that law had been one of the three faculties of Dacca University since its foundation in 1921. Lawyers were, therefore, well represented in University institutions. But lawyers - or those with law degrees - were also active in politics, both at the municipal and district board and at the provincial level.[98]

Doctors, both traditional and modern, formed another important professional group being attracted to Dacca, the largest urban centre in Eastern Bengal, in large numbers.[99] Mitford Hospital of Dacca not only provided training for dais and nurses, it had a medical school also where training for compounders and licentiates was available. Alongside doctors trained in western medicine, were Ayurvedic, homeopathic and Unani doctors also who were more popular with the orthodox section of the population. Most of the western educated doctors in Dacca, however, were Hindu and constituted an important section of the urban middle class. The 1911 district census recorded some 4,000 persons as engaged in medicine - but this figure included dentists, occulists, veterinary surgeons, midwives, vaccinators, compounders, nurses, masseurs etc.[100] The figure of about 400 registered and unregistered medical practitioners in the city given by the 1931 census is more useful as it excludes the miscellaneous categories included in the 1911 census. It confirms the District Gazetteer's report that Dacca was a city of many doctors.[101]

The most articulate class of professional people in Dacca, however, was composed of the University, college and school teachers, and many of them were politically active and socially respected. They were, though, quite a small group within the city - 472 men and 41 women in 1931.[102] As with the other professions, teaching too was dominated by Hindus, even in the University created mainly to pacify the Muslims.[103]

Of other members of the middle-class in the city many were engaged in what the Census Reports called Public Administration.[104] By contrast, the number of engineers, architects and surveyors in private practice was small, as was that of artists, sculptors, musicians and publishers.[105] There was always a contingent of troops in Dacca in the Peelkhana Cantonment, but the censuses note that it did not contain a single recruit from the city. By contrast, no less than 1,096 Dacca men were to be

found in Dacca's police force in 1931.[106] The police was concentrated in Mill Barracks and Rajarbagh while the army was concentrated in the Peelkhana Cantonment. During the Second World War the first ever airport was hastily built in Dacca in the Tejgaon area to be used by the RAF.[107]

Army and police apart, there was no remarkable segregation in the residential pattern of the various professional groups. Except for the University, and a few institutions like the Dacca College and the Engineering School, nearly all the educational institutions were located near the city centre. As the teachers were not provided with any residential quarters by the schools and colleges, they lived wherever accommodation was available. Therefore, no teachers' colony grew up at any particular area in the old part of Dacca.

Some Hindu lawyers and doctors settled in Wari, a new quality area, which was outside the bustling city centre; but one considerable example of segregated housing was provided by the railway quarters which in Dacca, as elsewhere, were provided for all levels of the service by the railway company itself.

Some commercial groups and artisans in hereditary traditional occupations were, however, concentrated in particular areas. Their concentration created a natural residential segregation from the point of view of religion also, since particular crafts were so often traditionally associated with a particular community. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Dacca experienced serious communal riots in 1905, 1926 and throughout the nineteen forties, the population remained residentially fairly mixed. This suggests that the city did not have very rigid residential segregation by community.[108]

Indeed integration was virtually forced upon residents in the old, congested town; people had to live where they could find accommodation and there was little scope for

significant redevelopments. The expansion of the city henceforth was bound to be northwards, where twentieth century Dacca had already made a substantial beginning. This, however, does not mean that the rest of Dacca was cut off from modern developments. Although for a number of reasons there had been no remarkable change in the spatial arrangements of roads, galis (by-lanes), bazars and housing in the old town, there had, however, been new patterns superimposed upon the old map - that of telegraph poles, electricity poles, water mains and other land marks - all amenities of the western world. Much of the responsibility for this transformation lay with Dacca Municipality - an elite controlled western institution which had itself been superimposed upon the indigenous society by the colonial government.

Notes and References

1. Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharya, 'Last achievements of Islam Khan' in Sir Jadu-nath Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal, vol. 2, Muslim Period, 1200 - 1757 (Dacca, 1948), 283 - 284.

   Mansingh, a Mughal Viceroy of Bengal, stayed in Dacca during 1602-1604 and strengthened its fortifications. Dacca, which was already an old imperial outpost, flourished into a town forming the nucleus of the future capital of Bengal. Islam Khan also found Dacca strategically important and made it his base in 1608; by 1612 he had turned it into his capital.

1A. The Buriganga has been spelt differently in different maps and sources. In the map of the city of Dacca including cantonments, surveyed in 1859, for instance, the river appeared as Boorygunga. See map no. 4 attached to A.H. Dani, Dacca, a Record of its Changing Fortunes (Dacca, 1962).
In the map of 'Town of Dacca and Surroundings' prepared in 1916, the river was mentioned as Buriganga. Although this is how it is normally written and pronounced in Bangladesh, yet another variation can be seen in the city of Dacca map of 1952. (See map no. 5 attached to Dani.) There it appeared as Burhiganga. 'Burhi' has a distinctly Urdu sound to it, which probably was only natural at the time when Dacca was the Capital of East Pakistan and was under an Urdu influence imposed by the Central Government of Pakistan.

2. B.C. Allen (ed), Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers, Vol.V., Dacca (Allahabad, 1912), 6 and 171 (hereafter District Gazetteer, 1912). See also Dani, 4 - 6, 15 - 16, 24 - 26.

   The Buriganga was reported to have been wide enough to harbour the Mughal Generals' big fleet of boats in the early seventeenth century. But it had probably been silting up over a period and by 1645 had become narrow enough to be bridged. By 1800 it became much wider again. In the present century it has become so shallow that steamers cannot come into the river as far as Dacca. But boats of 'considerable size' can easily ply on it during the rainy season. Small boats and motor launches fringe the river front in present-day Dacca throughout the year. There was, however, a steamer station in Badamtali during our period (1921-47). Steamers in those days came right in front of the city during the monsoon when the Buriganga swelled up every year. The steamer station was finally removed from Dacca during the post-Partition era.

3. District Gazetteer, 1912, 4-6.

4. Dani, 1.

5. Ibid, 1-2.

6. District Gazetteer, 1912, 13.
   See also ibid, 12, for a general description of the climate of Dacca. Being European, B.C. Allen (the author) obviously did not consider Dacca's winters, with an average minimum temperature of 55°F, to be in any way 'invigorating'. But, on the other hand, mild winters could have been a great attraction of Dacca to the Indians.

7. Dani, 7; SM. Taifoor, Glimpses of Old Dacca (Dacca, 1952), 6. See also Abdul Karim, Dacca the Mughal Capital (Dacca, 1964), 29. See Map 2 above, p. 16A.

8. Abdul Karim, 37 - 38.

9. Dani, 47. This information about the vast expansion of Mughal Dacca given by Dani comes from the account of Thomas Bowrey in A Geographical Account of Countries Around the Bay of Bengal (Cambridge, 1905), 149 - 151. For accounts of old Dacca see also James Taylor, A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca (Calcutta, 1840); Hakim Habibur Rahman, Asudgan-i-Dhaka (Dacca, 1946); Charles D'Oyly, Antiquities of Dacca (London, 1924 - 1930); J.T. Rankin, 'The Study of Antiquities in Dacca' (Reprinted from The Dacca Review, April 1920).

10. Grenfell Rudduck, Towns and villages of Pakistan (Karachi,1964), 76.

11. Ibid.

12. Dani, 100 -101.

13. Ibid., 54.

14. R. Heber, Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-5 (London, 1828), vol. I, 141.

15. M. Atiqullah and F. Karim Khan, Growth of Dacca City, population and area (Dacca,1965), 10.

16. Dani, 116.
Purana Paltan, and Topkhana developed as residential areas in the twientieth century.

17. Scooters and motor cycles came to Dacca after 1947.

Passenger buses were introduced in Dacca in 1947, although they did not become common until later.

See Dhaka Prokash, 12 January,1947.

18. Dani, 237. See the picture below, p. 18A.
See also Munshi Rahman Ali Taish, Twarikh-i-Dhaka., ed. by Dr Ahmed Ali (Arrah, 1910), 313 - 314.

19. Dani, 239.
Dani maintains that part of the Science Section was installed in Curzon Hall. According to Dr Quazi Motahar Hossain, however, the whole of the Science Faculty was accommodated in Curzon Hall. Interview with Dr. Quazi Motahar Hossain, in Dacca, 28 January,1977.

20. Dacca Review, August 1911, vol.1, No.5, 174, quoted in Dani, 238. Curzon Hall was built in 1904. After four years the new Dacca College buildings also sprang up in the fields of Ramna. They included a students' hostel - the first of its kind in Dacca -

which could accommodate 200 boys. See District Gazetteer, 1912, 161.

Later on, in 1921, Dacca University appropriated these buildings for its own students.

21. Rudduck, 90.

22. Report of the Building Committee, University of Dacca, Calcutta, 27 May 1924, i - iii .

23. St. Nihil Singh, 'The Dacca University' in the Modern Review vol. XXXIII, No. 4, April, 1923, 416-17.

24. The Hall was opened in 1931. See Tyson Collection, 18 August 1931 and see above, p. 18A.

25. Western sports were not common among local people before the University Athletic Club, established in 1921, started to popularize them in Dacca. See the Annual Report of Dacca University, 1922-23, 8 (hereafter D.U.A.R.) .

26. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Jibaner Smritidipe (In the light of the memories of life) (Calcutta, 1978), 86.

27. Northbrook Hall does not have pure European architecture. It is a fine combination of Anglo-Mughal architecture. See Dani, 237 - 38.

28. District Gazetteer, 1912, 173-74.

29. Ibid.

30. For a similar contrast between the British and indigenous sections of the city, see Maps 8A and 8B, pp. 90A, 90B.

31. F. Karim Khan and Nazrul Islam, High Class Residential Areas in Dacca City (Dacca, 1964), 23.

This article was reprinted from The Oriental Geographer , vol. VIII, No 1, 1964, 1 - 41.

32. F. B. Bradley-Birt, The Romance of an Eastern Capital (London, 1910), 262.

33. F. Karim Khan and Nazrul Islam, 23. See ibid., 29, for pictures of residential houses in Wari, Purana Paltan and Ramna areas.

34. Rudduck, 77.
See also Tapan Raychauhhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jehangir (Delhi, second impression, 1969).

35. For the suggestions for improving Dacca's slums see Professor P. Geddes, Report on Town Planning, Dacca (Calcutta, 1917), 14.

36. District Gazetteer, 1912, 175 - 76.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 175.
Personal experience of living in Dacca confirms the picture.

39. Interview with Tafazzal Hussain (retired Secretary, Revenue Department, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. He was a BCS. Officer before the Partition of India in 1947) in Dacca, 17 January 1977.

Interview with K.C. Roy (goldsmith for the last three generations) in Dacca, 19 February 1977.

40. Tapan Raychaudhuri, 226.

41. Ibid., 219.

42. F. Karim Khan and Nazrul Islam, 11 - 12.

43. Heber, 146 - 147. Quoted in Dani, 107. Dani wrote a vivid description of the Nimtoli Kothi and the Nawab, based on Heber's narrative. See Dani, 105 - 108.

44. Nalini Kanta Bhattasali 'Dhaka Colleger Sannihita Prachin Sthan Samuha' (old places near Dacca College) in Protiva; 1st year, 1st issue, 1911, 43.

44 Kalibari of Ramna was destroyed by Pakistan Army in 1971 as a part of the then Pakistan Central Government's policy of Islamicization of East Pakistan and of terrorizing pro-Hindu or pro-Indian elements in the province.

45. John Dawson Tyson, the District Magistrate of Dacca, was very impressed with 'Baldha' gardens which he described in 1936 as 'the most wonderful gardens, - four or five separate orchid houses, a huge rose garden, and about an acre of ground under cement tanks for water lilies. It must be about the only thing of its kind and scale in Bengal'. See Tyson Collection, (Indian Civil Service, Private Secretary to the Governor of Bengal 1930-35, 1938 and 1945-47), 27 December 1936, 1. Dani also described the lay-out of the gardens in detail. Narendra Narayan gave fascinating English names to various parts of his gardens. Baldha House also had an interesting museum. See Dani, 234 - 236. The Zamindars of Murapara and Dinajpur also lived in big mansions of European-style architecture, with their reception rooms as well furnished in European style. Interview with Dr. Quazi Motahar Hossain in Dacca, 28 January 1977.

46. Heber, 141.

47. This first census almost certainly undercounted the population of Dacca; since the mid-nineteenth century the city had been acquiring new functions and undergoing a slow revival as S.U. Ahmed has demonstrated. The 1881 census shows a more realistic figure of 79,000. For the growth of Dacca in the nineteenth century see S.U. Ahmed, 'The History of the City of Dacca, c.1840-1885' (University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1978) (Hereafter 'History').

48. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
For the population figures of Dacca City from 1872-1941 See: Census of India, 1872, Bengal, 107; 1881, Bengal ii, 524; 1891, Lower Bengal, 17; 1941, Vol. IV, 18.
Population figures for the city given in the Census Reports of 1881, 1911 and 1941 for the previous decades do not tally.

Census figures, therefore, should be treated only as approximations.

49. Census of India 1921, vol. V, part i, 108.

50. Ibid, 108, 30 - 34.

51. S.N.H.Rizvi (ed), East Pakistan District Gazetteers, Dacca (Dacca,1969), 81 (hereafter East Pakistan District Gazetteer).

52. Generally speaking, Dacca's growth rate was faster than most towns' in Bengal. See the attached diagram which shows the growth rate during 1872 - 1931. See also Census of India 1941, Vol.IV, 18.

It should be noted that in the growth of Dacca's population the contribution of Hindus and Muslims became increasingly unequal during the twentieth century. The proportions of the two major communities seem indeed by the mid-twentieth century to have been quite the reverse of those obtaining in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Muslims were then reported to have been overwhelmingly the larger community, Heber putting the figures even in 1824 as three to one. See Heber, 341.

Given the size and density of the old Hindu city one may doubt the accuracy of European travellers' observations on the composition of the population. Their impression, gained from the great Mughal public buildings and the houses of the Muslim officials visible from the main thoroughfares, is socially subjective,not objectively accurate. Taken with the census figures from 1872 onwards, however, it does seem that the communal structure of the city underwent a very significant change, especially after 1921 when the rate of growth in Hindu numbers noticeably outpaced that of the Muslims. The following table will give a clear picture:

Numbers of Hindus and Muslims in Dacca City

Year	Hindus	Muslims
1901	51,247	41,728
1911	59,994	47,295
1921	69,145	49,325
1931	80,024	57,764
1941	129,233	82,921

(Census of India, 1901, Bengal, vol. VI,part ii,34-35. The figures mentioned are of Dacca Kotwali which is a slightly bigger area than Dacca Municipality.)
Census of India, 1911, vol. V, part ii, 20 - 21.
Census of India, 1921, vol. V, part ii, 22 - 23.
Census of India, 1931, vol. V, part ii, 59.
Census of India, 1941, vol. IV, 94, 95.

A number of factors may have been responsible for whatever shift in the communal balance of the Dacca city population occurred during the British period. The moving of the capital to Murshidabad and still later of independent Muslim authority to Lucknow and Hyderabad doubtless led to some

migration of Muslim military and service families and of those specialist artisans who served the Muslim courts and nobility. The decline of the cotton industry may also have reduced the Muslim weaver element to a certain extent. On the other hand, the revival of Dacca from the later nineteenth century as a commercial and administrative centre may well have attracted Hindus in a disproportionate number, dominant as they were in the commerce of Bengal and leaders in the acquisition of the English language and of the technical qualifications required for the professional and educational services. The establishment of Dacca University did attract a number of people to the city in the twenties. Because of the long educational lead enjoyed by the Hindu community, most of the students and teachers were also Hindus. By the time our period began, Dacca was indeed a Hindu majority city with the Muslims as the next largest group and a sprinkle of Christian, Buddhist and other communities.

53. Census of India, 1921, vol. V, part i, 109.

54. Only a small section of the middle class Hindus and Muslims of Dacca used hackney carriages, bicycles or cycle-rickshaws. Community-wise, more Hindus than Muslims used such transport within the city. The zamindars - both Hindu and Muslim - had private 'hackneys'. A few rich people, including the Nawab of Dacca, had private cars. Middle class women used hackney carriages - heavily covered when used by Muslim ladies.

Interview with Kshirode Lal Ray, (retired pleader of the Dacca Bar), Dacca, 14 January 1977;
Interview with Dr Quazi Motahar Hossain Dacca, 28 January, 1977.

55. F. Karim Khan and Nazrul Islam, 18.

56. The commercial pages of Dacca local periodicals give a clear picture of the spread of trade, business and industry in the city and the combined nature of trade and residential areas of Dacca. See Chabuk, Dacca, March 1935, Third year, 1st issue, 1 - 10, 15,17,18,19,21,28; Shonar Bangla, Dacca, 4 May 1946, 2,6,8,13,15-20,22,23;
See also F. Karim and Nazrul Islam, 18.

The commercial pages of Thacker's Indian Directory also indicate Dacca's thriving trades and industries. See for example Thacker's Indian Directory (Mofussil Station), 1921, 123-124.

A traditional business spot which survived till our period in Dacca was Sutrapur. This was the quarters of the Sutradhars (carpenters) and a busy timberyard under the Mughals where the carpenters built boats to meet the need of the Royal Navy and the people. See for details Sri Satindra Mohan Chattapadhyay, Banglar Samajik Itihaser Bhumika 1100-1900 (An introduction to the social history of Bengal) (Calcutta, 1974), 206.

Dacca's unique 'green boats' have been mentioned in Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Jibaner Smritidipe, 124-125.

57. Azimusshan Haider, 'A Concise History of Dacca Municipality' in Azimusshan Haider (ed), A City and its Civic Body, (Dacca, 1966), 133 (hereafter 'A City').

58. Thacker's Indian Directory (Calcutta,1921) (Mofussil Station), 123.

59. Ibid, 1911, 159 - 160.
Some of these Basaks, Roys and Dases had substantial landed property and were recorded as zamindars in Thacker's Directories.

60. Thacker's Indian Directory, 1901,(Mofussil Station), 778.

61. Ibid., 1921, 123.

62. The latter two places, being located near the river, were ideal for timber business. Thacker's Indian Directory , 1901, 123; 1911, 129; 1901, 123.

63. Thacker's Indian Directory, 1901, 778; 1911, 160.

64. Ibid., 1931, 143.

65. Ibid., 1911, 160.

66. Ibid., 1901, 160, 778; 1911, 124; 1931, 143.

67. Chaudhury, M.Islam,'The Regional Geography of Dacca' (University of Aligarh, M.A. Thesis, 1944), 124.

68. Ibid., 126. Later a number of up-countrymen came and settled there as shoemakers. Some of the indigenous shoemakers lived in Malitola, Nawabpur and Kazirbagh. See East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 205.

69. Islam, 125 - 126.

70. Ibid.

71. Dalbazar lies between Poddar Ghat and Bairagitola. These were traditionally Hindu areas, although no big area in Dacca was exclusively Hindu in our period.

72. Thacker's Indian Directory, 1921, 124.

73. Islam, 133.

74. Ibid.

75. Census of India, 1931, vol.V,Part ii, 91.

76. Desha Bandhu Sugar Mill had a worker's barrack adjacent to it. Interview with Mohammad Hamid Miah, (Retired Record Peon of Dacca Municipality), in Dacca, 26 January,1977.

77. Later on cheap mill-made cloth posed a threat to the handloom industries.

78. East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 197-198. A gamcha is a cotton scarf or towel.

79. A.T. Weston, quoted in Islam, 114.

80. Islam, 116.

81. East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 202.

82. Islam, 116.

83. Ibid. See also East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 202.

84. Islam, 116.

85. The canal is called Dolai Khal at the present time. The same canal was described as Dulai Khal in some sources. The latter name was probably given to the Khal by the Mughal rulers. This canal was joined with another channel described as Dolie Nudee (Dolie river) in map No.4 of City of Dacca in 1859 attached to Dani's book. The name of the canal might have originated from this Dolie river. Dolai Khal is part of a Khal complex with different names for its different parts. Babu Bazar Khal, Narinda Khal and Sutrapur Khal, for example, were connected with Dolai Khal. For a history of Dacca's Khals see Bhattasali, 43.

86. Islam, 119.

87. Interview with K.C.Roy.

Most of the traditional muslin weaving families, however, were believed to have left the city after the destruction of the industry and joined the agricultural farmers in the district.

For a brief history of muslin weaving in Dacca see S.M.A.(Syed Murtaza Ali), 'The Story of Dacca Muslins' in Haider (ed), A City, 40 - 42.

88. Census of India, 1931. vol V; part ii, 110.

89. a) Interview with Hakim Irtiazur Rahman in Dacca, 30 January, 1977.
b) Interview with Ali Akbar and
c) Belayet Hossain (Peons of Dacca Municipality's Record Room) in Dacca, 24 January, 1977.
d) Interview with Najibur Rahman (Grocer) in Dacca, 14 February, 1977.
e) See also Rudduck, 74.
f) Taifoor, 16-17.
Kutti's are generally believed to be cross breeds between Afghans, Mughals and the indigenous population. Some believe that they came from the neighbouring villages to serve the Muslim nobles. Among other professions they also took over Dhan Kuta or Kutna (rice-husking).
This is probably the origin of their name'Kutti'. They developed a dialect of their own - a curious mixture of Bengali, Persian and Urdu. The rich (though coarse), ironic quality of Kutti dialect can be compared with the cockney dialect of London and the 'slang language' of Favela residents in Brazil.
g) See Anthony and Elizabeth Leeds, 'Brazil and the Myth of Urban Rurality' in Arthur J. Field (ed) City and Country in

the Third World: Issues in the modernization of Latin America (Cambridge, 1970), 261.

In their boisterous nature, they seem similar to the boisterous poor Muslims of Shahganj in Allahabad.

h) See C. A. Bayly, The Local Roots of Indian Politics Allahabad 1880 - 1920 (Oxford, 1975), 46.

90. The 1931 Census records 1639 males and 890 females as engaged in domestic service - most of them presumably living in their employers' houses - but the figures seem improbably low. See Census of India, 1931, vol.V, part ii, 147. It is now generally believed that there was a large concentration of washermen in the Fuller Road area. The meaning of the Bengali word 'Fuller' is Dhoba or washerman. But this is sheer coincidence as the name of the Road in fact came from J. B. Fuller - the first Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam (1905). See Azimusshan Haider, Dacca: History and Romance in Place Names (Dacca, 1967), 38 (hereafter 'Place Names')

91. Their main colony in our period was in Mirpoor away from the city centre.

92. Census of India, 1911 vol.V, part ii, 306. The figures given are for the whole of the district, but it seems probable that a very large portion of the meticulously accurate total was to be found in the city. Since it is stated that the total also includes receivers of stolen goods and cattle poisoners, both of whom seem unlikely to have readily reported their presence to the census officials, perhaps the figure may be taken as an approximation.

93. Census of India, 1921, vol.V, part ii, 335;
Census of India, 1931, vol.V, part ii, 151.

The unexplained halving of the number between 1921 and 1931 may also be treated with scepticism. The census of 1941 did not mention their existence at all!

94. Because of the strict purdah (seclusion) among Muslim women, it was unlikely for them to be in a situation leading to such professions. Begging was also not a likely profession among Muslims on a large scale because of the Prophet's condemnation of it. On the other hand a section of Hindus encouraged begging. The Radha-Krishna worshippers - Bostams, Bairagi's and also some Bauls of Dacca considered begging to be part of their religion.

Interview with K.C.Roy;
Interview with Hafizur Rahman (Retired District Sub-Registrar) in Dacca, 9 February, 1977.

95. For details see J. H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal (California, 1968), 1 - 20; See also Bengal District Administration Report 1913-1914 (Calcutta, 1915), 166.

96. This was of course an extreme generalization made by John Beames about the people of Chittagong District which could be applied to Dacca also.

See John Beames, Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian (London,1961), 284.
The District Gazetteer of Dacca wrote in 1912 that litigation in Dacca was very heavy and the staff employed in Dacca was proportionately larger than in other areas of Eastern Bengal. See District Gazetteer 1912, 142.

97. Thacker's Indian Directory, 1905 (Mofussil Station), 827-828; 1911; 159;
Census of India, 1911, vol.V, part ii, 296;
Thacker's Indian Directory, 1921, (Mofussil Station) 122-123.

The Bar of the city was dominated by the Hindus. In 1921 there were only two practising Muslim pleaders recorded by Thacker - one was Osman Bhuiyan and the other was Abdul Siddique; Dacca city had 946 people engaged in legal profession in 1931. See Census of India, 1931 vol V, part ii, 139 Howrah city had a much smaller number of people in this field - a mere 287 for a population 1½ times as large as Dacca's in 1931;
Thacker's Indian Directory, 1940-41, (Civil Divisions), 19-20.

98. Khwaja Nazimuddin, Chairman of Dacca Municipality (1922-29) and Chief Minister of Bengal in 1943 was a Bar-at-law. See Kazi Ahmed Kamal, Politics and Inside Stories (Dacca,1970), 123.

99. East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 259, 271 - 277.

100. Census of India, 1911, vol.V, part ii, 297.

101. Ibid., 1931, vol.V, part ii, 140-141.
Some of the doctors were well known in local politics also. Among those who were active in municipal politics, Hakim Habibur Rahman was a Unani doctor. He was a popular hakim, a writer, editor of an Urdu periodical and a Municipal Commissioner. He was a family physician of the Nawabs of Dacca. For a brief life sketch of H.Rahman see Haider, Place Names,44.

102. Census of India, 1911 vol.V, part ii, 299;
Ibid., 1921, vol.V, part ii, 324;
Ibid., 1931, vol.V, part ii, 142.

In 1911 the district had 2,593 male teachers and 93 female teachers. In 1921 the numbers had risen to 3,430 males and 252 females and in 1931 to 4,354 males and 498 females.

103. Muslims constituted about one fifth of the total number of teachers in the initial years of the University. The Muslim students also formed a small proportion as they formed only about 19 per cent of the total number of students in 1921. See Dacca University Calendars, 1921-24, 215 - 217;
'The Vice Chancellor, Sir P.J. Hartog's Address delivered at a meeting of the Court of the University of Dacca, 25 November, 1925';
Dacca University Calendars, 1929-1933, 8-9.

104. Census of India, 1911, vol.V, part ii, 291;
1931, vol.V, part ii, 132;
1941, vol.IV, 125.

105. The city had 37 males under the heading architects, surveyors, engineers and employees (not being state servants), 73 as musicians (other than military), actors and dancers. See Census of India, 1931, vol.V, part ii, 145.

106. Ibid, 135.

107. S.N.H. Rizvi (ed), Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Dacca (Dacca, 1975), 189.

108. It is, however, common knowledge that during any communal tension in the forties, Hindus and Muslims migrated to their respective majority areas for personal safety and came back to their own places as soon as peace was restored. But unfortunately no statistics were recorded about riot-migrations within the city.

Chapter 2

Civic Amenities and Dacca Municipality

Providing civic amenities on a large scale to the people through a corporate body was a western concept which was imported into India by the British government in the mid-nineteenth century. Ordinary Indians had no tradition of taking up continued responsibility for the basic needs of people outside their immediate family circles. In a home-oriented society, where public life was, and still is, largely confined to socialising with close relations and friends, the idea of a group of citizens catering to the needs for water, lighting and sanitation of a large number of unrelated and unacquainted people was a revolutionary innovation.

Although the municipal institution was a foreign import, it would be wrong to assume that prior to its introduction into India the streets were never swept, the people lived without water, markets and slaughterhouses were neglected and public cemeteries and burning ghats were unheard of. During the Mughal period also, Indians enjoyed these facilities, some of which were provided by the individuals themselves. Certain urban needs were also institutionalized under the Mughals. True to the centralized and autocratic nature of Mughal rule, the city administration in the subcontinent was undemocratic and authoritarian. The city was looked after by a powerful official known as the Kotwal, directly appointed by the Mughal emperor. With his enormous power and influence, the Kotwal maintained law and order with the help of a large number of city guards (barkandazes) and some night watchmen (chaukidars). A good number of horses was kept as an ever-ready means of transport. An army of spies kept the Kotwal informed about city life. These spies were actually scavengers employed for the purpose of sanitation. They were called halal-khors (men living on well-earned incomes) or domes in some areas, such as Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. In the course of cleaning people's residences twice a day, they gathered 'information

about what went on in every house'. As the Kotwal was responsible for both peace and municipal amenities in the towns, the information supplied to him by the halal-khors covered all aspects of people's lives - social, political and economic. The city was divided into wards, each presided over by a mir muhulla (chief of the ward) appointed by the Kotwal. These mirs kept registers of houses, roads, slaughterhouses, sweeper colonies and cemeteries. The Kotwal supervised the markets, controlled market prices, weights and measures, levied market dues and local taxes, transit duties and tolls. In short, he combined a whole host of municipal functions in one person. And in the absence of any central or provincial government regulations about a broad-based and properly constituted municipal board in the modern sense, the Kotwal was, in himself, the sole municipal institution of Mughal India. [1]

Despite the presence of this all-powerful patriarch, a handful of wealthy citizens could generally be found to show occasional concern for their less fortunate fellows. They provided the community with a tank here, or a sarai-khana (rest-house) or burning ghat there. These charities were, however, sporadic, as they often depended on the vagaries of the religious piety of a limited number of wealthy individuals. For civic services, therefore, it was likely that people relied more on the Kotwal's office, which was stable and well organised. There is, though, no evidence that India achieved a high standard in public health and sanitation under the Mughals. Bradley-Birt painted a grim picture of Dacca's 'undrained and unswept' lanes and alleys under the Mughals. Despite its picturesque fort and Katras, bazars and mosques, the city was 'foul and pestilent beyond description'. During the early Mughal period in Dacca the bazars were lightly built so that they could be burnt down when months of neglect necessitated such drastic sanitary measures.[2] But it is also true that filthy cities and epidemics wer

not just phenomena of Mughal India; these conditions prevailed in contemporary English cities as well.[3] According to some writers at the fag end of Mughal rule in India, when the central authority degenerated and collapsed, the towns and cities increasingly slipped away from central control; consequently, the sanitary conditions of the urban areas worsened. The Kotwals availed themselves of the opportunities provided by political instability to use their despotic powers for private gain. As a result, the public services in cities grew irregular and disorderly.[4]

Under East India Company rule, the absolute powers of the Kotwal declined and his role as the chief of the town police was taken over by a European Magistrate who, besides assuming responsibility for the preservation of law and order, also took over the municipal functions of the Kotwal. Although Kotwals were still appointed to supervise municipal services in some places, they were put under the general control of the Magistrate. This was the situation in Dacca, for example, until the office of Kotwal was abolished in 1814.[5]

Responsibility for public services during Company rule, and also during the first quarter of a century under the Crown, lay with one person - the District Magistrate - as it had lain with the Kotwal in Mughal days. Until various reforms were made in this respect and authority to provide municipal services was transferred to the representatives of the local people, the quality of public services depended mainly on the personality and energy of these officers. As far as leadership and the nature of responsibility were concerned, the system was basically the same under the all-powerful Kotwals and the authoritarian District Magistrates. Despite possessing vast powers, the Kotwals, before degenerating completely in the last days of Mughal rule, were not unresponsive to local opinion, especially to the opinions of the wealthy and influential. This pragmatism was also shown by British District Magistrates. The local notables, therefore, were not ignored with respect to civic affairs under the new administration, either.[6]

Until the mid-nineteenth century, however, there was no coordinated approach to the provision of civic amenities. Without any legislation or central direction, municipal institutions started growing up in various parts of the Company's India in a haphazard way. The first impulse to improve India's sanitation came in the seventeenth century from non-Indian trading communities whose economic interests, as well as health, were threatened by frequent outbreaks of cholera, smallpox and fevers (i.e. malaria, typhoid, kala azar) in epidemic form among the local people in the so-called 'black towns'. Nevertheless, throughout the seventeenth century, the 'black suburbs' inhabited by Indians remained a health hazard to the European 'white towns' in the Presidency cities. Therefore, as early as 1688, a municipal corporation was set up by the East India Company in Madras. Modelled on the Borough of Portsmouth, it consisted of an English Town Clerk, an English Judicial Recorder, and a Court of thirteen aldermen of whom three were English, three were Portuguese and seven were Indians. The aldermen were chosen by a general body of 'burgesses' and a Mayor was elected by the Aldermen from their own ranks. The corporation was made responsible for the upkeep of the Town Hall and a school and for general sanitation and public health. It was also a judicial body like the similar corporations of contemporary English boroughs. Despite having an Indian majority, the corporation failed to persuade the indigenous population to pay the new taxes imposed by the corporation to finance public services. In 1726, new forms of corporation were tried in Bombay and Calcutta. They were not as open as the seventeenth century Madras corporation. They were partially controlled by the Governor in Council and were more judicial in nature than administrative. This was a retrograde step, and these corporations also met with failure.[7]

The next major experiment in municipal administration took place in Calcutta in 1773. The city was divided into wards, on the old Mughal pattern with the Magistrate occupying the Mughal Kotwal's position of overall responsibility.

Each ward was put under the supervision of a Kotwal who was appointed with the general approval of the householders; their approval was necessary because the taxes paid by them to meet the cost of the municipal and police services were voluntary. To make the system work, the Kotwals were picked from the wealthiest and most influential sections of the people. Even this tactic was unsuccessful, for the voluntary contributions from the people were irregular and inadequate. In 1780, therefore, another set of regulations was enacted by the Governor-General for the improvement of the town of Calcutta. Thirteen municipal commissioners replaced the Kotwals. All were Europeans, chosen by the Governor-General. They were given authority to assess the annual rent of people's property and fix a municipal rate on holdings; for this purpose the whole town was surveyed. Taxation was made compulsory and defaulters could be imprisoned. [8]

Despite these efforts the sanitation of the town did not improve noticeably, and so new regulations were promulgated in the 1790s, which gave municipal organisations to Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Instead of the commissioners, a Bench of Justices was given responsibility for providing the towns with civic amenities. The Bench was authorised to appoint scavengers, to repair the streets and to assess householders for payment of rates. Rates were compulsory and were not supposed to exceed five per cent of the annual value of the holdings. Members of the Bench, which was a judicial body, were known as Justices of the Peace. They were appointed by the Governor-General and were given wide powers and responsibilities covering judicial affairs, municipal services and law and order.

Although most of the Justices of the Peace were Company's senior officers and white, a sprinkling of local elements was also included on the Bench. Thus all three Presidency towns had a few respectable, property-owning Indian citizens among the Justices of the Peace, to help their colleagues with their local knowledge. [9]

However, both the money collected and the services rendered proved to be inadequate for the growing needs of the towns. Important items such as water supply and lighting were not included in the list of public services. The Justices of the Peace were a loose, primarily judicial body and did not give adequate attention to the conservancy and public health of the towns. Gradually, the municipal power wielded by them slipped into the hands of the Presidency Magistrates.[10]

The major changes in the municipal arena came in the nineteenth century. The growth of municipal services in India under the British can be regarded as an echo of the important changes which had taken place in Britain, where the drive to improve public health and sanitation was a recent phenomenon. It was not until 1835 that legislation about municipal corporations was enacted in Britain. The growth of her municipal services was not remarkably fast, either. It was only when people were shocked and overwhelmed by the vastness of the problems in the overcrowded Victorian cities that they started taking a positive interest in such matters. The first comprehensive public health legislation was introduced in 1848 and in the same year a General Board of Health was set up. In the mid-nineteenth century, the need to improve the sanitation was no less obvious in free and prosperous English cities than in colonial Indian cities. This concern about the inadequacy of English municipal services was reflected in Dr. John Snow's remark at a Social Science Conference in Bristol in 1848: 'Our present machinery must be greatly enlarged, radically altered, and endowed with new powers'. That the habits of the English were no better than the Indians was indicated in his suggestion that municipal authorities should be given effective powers to:

> do away with that form of liberty to which some communities cling, the sacred power to poison to death not only themselves but their neighbours.[11]

A series of acts followed in England to tackle these

problems. A Local Government Board for sanitation was set up in 1871, while the Public Health Act of 1872 and the Comprehensive Public Health Act of 1875 improved the previous sanitary and public health regulations. Further Acts passed in the early twentieth century (the Open Spaces Act of 1906, the School Medical Service Act of 1907 and the Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1919) took more aspects of people's health into their fold. [12]

Whatever improvements were made in England with respect to sanitation and public health, had stemmed almost as much from public pressure as from government. In the authoritarian Indian society, where government was regarded as 'Man-Bap' (Mother and Father), it was, predictably, not the local leaders who first raised their worried voices against the ever-increasing danger to public health in the cities. Therefore, when the time came to show local initiative to improve the towns and cities in the mid-nineteenth century, the long-standing habit of depending on government proved a stronger force than the newly granted freedom. The first formal step to provide municipal organisations in India was taken in 1842, but people in general preferred to depend on the administrative authority to implement the new laws on their behalf. Act X of 1842, applicable only to the Bengal Presidency, stated that a town committee could be created to provide sanitation and other municipal amenities if two-thirds of the householders applied for it. This was the first attempt to extend the scope of formal municipal administration beyond the Presidency town, but it remained virtually inoperative as insufficient people showed enthusiasm for it. When the Act was introduced to Mussoorie in 1842, to Nainital in 1845 and Serampore in 1846, mainly at the request of the European residents, it met the same fate.[13] In Dacca it was thwarted by petitions from the local people. [14]

The years between 1840 - 1856 saw the introduction of elective principles in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The municipal services became more extensive at the same time and included street lighting and street watering along with

other sanitary measures.[15] A number of changes were made in municipal administration in India in the late 1850 s, especially after the Mutiny of 1857, when financial necessity led the British Government to tap new sources of income. Government thought it would be a relief if public services were financed out of local taxation administered by local bodies. These suggestions, which came from the central government, were supposed to be put into practice by the provincial legislatures in the light of local needs. Lord Lawrence's government issued a resolution in 1864 which urged that the cost of town police forces and other local affairs should be borne by the townspeople. Thus, by the sixties, almost all the major provinces had introduced their municipal legislation, and the important towns of India, including Dacca in Eastern Bengal, had their municipalities established. Lord Lawrence's suggestion for decentralization was followed by Lord Mayo's proposal to relieve the imperial finance of the burden of local public works and social services by transferring them to local government.[16]

Except in the Presidency towns, where a number of reforms regarding municipal administration were carried out in the 1860 s and 1870 s, elective principles were not widely operative in India. Most of the members of municipal boards outside the Presidency towns were picked by District Magistrates from among the men they regarded as respectable citizens. Local boards, therefore, were almost completely under official control.[17] This remained the case even after the passing of Lord Ripon's famous Resolution on Local Self-Government (18 May 1882) which pointed out the direction in which all Indian municipalities developed sooner or later. By Ripon's time it was no longer enough to have selected men, for the rising middle class was becoming more ambitious politically. Elections at municipal and local board level were the cheapest concessions to new Indian political aspirations that the British government could get away with. Ripon's liberal sentiments were not, therefore, the only factor in bringing an elective element into the local boards; political and financial pressure also provided a compelling incentive.

Ripon's Resolution was pragmatic. It recommended more freedom for the members of municipal boards, less official interference, elected non-official chairmen whenever possible and a two-thirds majority of elected and non-official members. But officials continued to maintain control over a large number of municipal boards. As Hugh Tinker explains:

> All the provinces created the required two-thirds majorities of non-official members both for urban and rural boards, but as a large majority of these non-officials were still dependent upon the district magistrate's favour for nomination, the change was more formal than real. The extent to which election was introduced depended more upon the attitudes of Heads of provinces than upon the aptitude of their peoples. 18

The Bengal government responded to Ripon's Resolution by passing the Bengal Government Act of 1884 (Act III). This Act provided the framework in which Bengali municipalities developed until after the end of British rule. Under it, municipal affairs became the responsibility of municipal commissioners - whose number varied from nine to thirty. Their term of office was fixed at three years. The Act divided Bengal municipalities into three categories according to the degree of elective principle applied to them. Thus, the first category included those municipalities where one-third of the commissioners were nominated by government and two-thirds were elected by the ratepayers. The chairman of a first class municipality was elected by the commissioners from among themselves. Second class municipalities had their chairmen and one-third of the commissioners nominated by government. The rest were elected by the ratepayers. The third category consisted of those municipalities who had their chairmen and all the commissioners nominated by government. In all three classes, the vice-chairman was elected by the commissioners from their own ranks. Most of the municipalities fell under the first two classes, only the backward districts being put in the third category. As the largest and most important town of Eastern Bengal, Dacca was recognised as a first class municipality. In practice, by 1885, only in the provinces of Bengal, the North-Western Provinces and the Central Provinces

were elected members in a majority; elsewhere most of the members were still nominated. The District Magistrates remained as chairmen of municipalities in most Indian towns: out of 147 municipalities in Bengal, 118 were wholly or partially elected while only seventeen had non-official and elected chairmen - Dacca Municipality was one of them. [19]

Although District Magistrates were no longer chairmen in the first class municipalities, the authority of local government was not completely abolished by the Act. In fact, the regulations put the municipal commissioners under the general supervision of the District Magistrate and the Divisional Commissioner. The District Magistrates still nominated part of the board. In addition, he maintained enormous influence over all board members through his power to nominate men for Honorary Magistracies, Tax Commissionerships and titles, all of which were highly coveted by the local dignitaries. Such positions and honours, being virtually within his gift, provided a useful source of patronage. The Magistrate and the Divisional Commissioner also had the power to intervene in cases where the municipal commissioners exceeded their legal powers, or where their actions were likely to lead to a breach of the peace or to endanger the health or safety of the public.

The threat to commissioners' freedom from these officials was most real with respect to the municipalities' financial affairs. The annual budgets framed by the municipal boards could not be given effect to until they had been approved by the District Magistrate and the Divisional Commissioner. The latter was also empowered by the Act to modify the budgets as he saw fit or to send them back to the boards if he was not convinced of the soundness of the municipalities' financial policies. The commissioners were also under a legal obligation to follow a number of Account Rules in dealing with the municipal funds. Their freedom was further restricted by the audit system which the Examiners of Local Accounts could conduct annually. [20]

Despite the provisions for official control, though, the elected chairman of a municipality was no mere figurehead. He had enormous responsibility, both inside and outside the municipality. Within it, he had to deal with the staff as chief executive and as the representative of the commissioners. He had to deal with the commissioners as their more responsible colleague. Outside the municipality, he represented the board in his dealings with local government and the ratepayers. He could delegate to the vice-chairman any or all of the authority vested in him as the representative of the municipal commissioners.

The chairman certainly was the most important member of the board as the commissioners could not 'set aside any act of the Chairman which he had authority at the time to perform'. If they disliked any of his actions, they could pass a resolution urging him not to perform similar acts in future and could set aside the acts as invalid if the chairman repeated them after the passing of such a resolution.[21] The chairman, however, had much more scope for influence and prestige than statutory powers. He was empowered by the Act to appoint municipal servants drawing less than certain specified salaries.

The Dacca Municipality had 21 commissioners who were charged with the responsibility to make policies for the municipality in their meetings. Ordinary general meetings took place as often as the chairman called them, but at least once a month. The chairman had no power to reject a majority decision; indeed as the head of the executive within the municipality, he was expected to implement the decision loyally.[22]

During the 1890 s, elected boards became a natural feature of municipal life in most towns of Bengal, Madras and later in other provinces. Nevertheless, the tradition which had been set in the nineteenth century, of official control reinforced by the authoritarian structure of municipal administration, never completely faded away.

However, this democratic facade attracted a large number of Indians into municipal politics. Some of them were more motivated by the political idea of bringing national self-government through local self-government than by the notion of reforming and improving Indian cities and towns alone. Those well known Indian leaders who gave enthusiastic and articulate support to the drive to expand local self-government in India - namely G.K. Gokhale, Pheroze Shah Mehta, S.N. Banerjea and Raja Peari Mohan Mukherji - were primarily all politicians.[23]

At the same time, the general mood of Indian politicians changed. Ever since the Partition of Bengal in 1905, political extremists had surfaced in a number of places throughout the subcontinent. Although Bengal was reunited in 1911, radical elements among the nationalists, who had no faith in gradual constitutional solutions to the problem of political emancipation, continued to make their presence felt all over India.[24] Politics gained more importance than administrative efficiency in all spheres of activity of representative institutions, including local self-government.

The first important reforms in the twentieth century came in 1909. The Morley-Minto Reforms, as they were generally called, were based on the proposals of the Royal Decentralization Commission in India. The Reforms urged that municipalities should have increased responsibility for the provision of civic amenities to the people, particularly in the field of primary education. Their powers of taxation should be increased and all boards were expected to have an elected majority and an elected, non-official chairman. However, the chronic shortage of municipal funds and the Great War of 1914 - 18 disrupted the implementation of these proposals.[25]

The Montagu -Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 transferred the subject of local self-government to the hands of elected provincial ministers responsible to legislatures. The electorate was extended and official control over municipal

boards diminished: but as the municipalities became more democratic, their efficiency in providing public services to the towns decreased. Apart from the well-known slow process of democratic administration, the years of dyarchy saw two major phases of disruption - the non-cooperation campaigns of the twenties and thirties. As these were directed against administration of all kinds, local self-government also had to suffer the consequences in many towns.[26]

During the period 1920 - 37, the municipal boards served more as training schools for aspiring politicians than as efficient machines geared to looking after some of the vital needs of the people. The democratization of local self-government under the 1919 Reforms did not eradicate official control completely. In Bengal municipalities, one-third of the total number of members were still nominated by the local government or, more accurately, by the District Magistrates. District Magistrates were still ex-officio members of municipalities, though no longer chairmen. The Government of Bengal made another set of reforms in 1932, thereby increasing the proportion of the elected membership from two-thirds to three-quarters in all mofussil municipalities.[27] This accentuated the tendency for municipalities to serve as spring-boards into the Provincial legislatures, leaving them in the hands of less successful men. Meanwhile, the Indian nationalist movement intensified. With Congress, the Muslim League and the government locked in mortal conflict, the basic municipal functions of improving the sanitation and environment of cities and towns seemed somewhat mundane.

Nevertheless, even in the last heady decades of the British Raj, life had to go on. While the leading actors on the Indian political stage tried to shape the course of history, more obscure men were responsible for providing the sewerage, electricity and other amenities which make city life possible. These men operated in the limited world of the municipality, the western institution of local self-govern-

ment whose evolution has just been sketched. Before considering who they were, it is necessary to look at the services they provided. This chapter will therefore focus on the most essential municipal amenities and their distribution in Dacca during 1921-1947. The next chapter will explain how these amenities were financed; this will be followed by a discussion of the municipal commissioners themselves and their politics.

In the early nineteenth century, the city of Dacca was in a pitiful state so far as its public health and sanitation was concerned, and so, mainly on the initiative of successive District Magistrates, a series of committees came into being to improve the city's appearance and health. In keeping with Mughal traditions, respectable local people were associated with these committees. The main defect of these bodies, however, was their lack of legal status: they had no authority to enforce measures. For example, they could not persuade the populace to change their age-old habits of burying their dead within the boundaries of their homes or throwing partially cremated bodies into the river, nor could they convince residents that, without their financial contributions, the sanitation of the city would not improve. These committees depended entirely on the personalities of the District Magistrates and a few local stalwarts to perform miracles of improvement, with remarkably few loaves and fishes from the surplus of the chaukidari tax. It was not until 1 August 1864, when Dacca was given a municipality with legal powers and authority, that the people could be directly taxed for municipal improvements. Under the Bengal Government's Municipal Improvements Act of 1864 (Act III), Dacca Municipality, for the first time, fixed a house tax, at seven and a half per cent of the annual rental value. It was further empowered by the Bengal Government in 1870 to raise this rate to ten per cent, to meet the ever-increasing demand for municipal services. Although strong protests from the people prevented the rate from rising beyond eight per cent, these taxes nevertheless enhanced the income of the Municipality considerably - thus expanding the scope for

municipal amenities in the 1870 s. [28]

During the committee days of the 1830 s and 1840 s, municipal services in Dacca were confined mainly to excavating the Dolai Khal, repairing bridges, filling ditches and marshes, sweeping, widening and metalling roads and streets, destroying pie dogs, clearing jungles and undergrowth and looking after the cleanliness of wells and tanks. Upon acquiring legal authority and the power of taxation in the post-Mutiny era, Dacca Municipality increased both the size of its establishment and the volume and variety of its public services. In place of the small number of sweepers, carts, baskets and bullocks of former times, Dacca Municipality in the 1860s and 1870s maintained a host of sweepers, road-coolies, bricklayers, carpenters, bhistis (water carriers), gardeners, overseers (to supervise conservancy work), tahsildars (tax collectors), clerks and a secretary. And yet the modernization of Dacca's sanitation and public health proceeded very slowly. Thus although the supply of pure drinking water was vital to improve public health, and despite the fact that it had been strongly recommended by Dr. Cutcliffe in 1868, in a comprehensive scheme for Dacca's modernization, it was not until 1878 that the city's first water-works was opened. [29]

While the actual range of municipal services was very much the same in all Indian cities, Dacca was unique as far as the provision of at least two of her civic amenities was concerned - the water and electricity works. Both were private gifts from the Nawabs, the most wealthy and respectable members of the town's elite - not, as in other cities, the results of corporate, municipal or governmental enterprise. The water-works of Narayanganj Municipality, for instance, were financed out of private subscriptions by the European jute merchants as a community. [30] Charity for public tanks, burning ghats, temples and mosques is a well known Indian phenomenon, but the public spirit required to provide free

civic amenities on a large scale had never been noted as the predominant characteristic of the elites in India. These acts of munificence were spectacular feats therefore, in which the descendants of the Nawabs take pride to the present day.

Before the construction of the water-works in 1878, the main sources of water supply in the city had been the river Buriganga and a large number of tanks and wells sunk into the soil. Orthodox Hindus' unflinching faith in the purity of river water in general and the sanctity of Ganges water in particular helped to make Buriganga water seem potable and agreeable to many local people. Neither the poor and illiterate Hindus nor the poor and illiterate Muslims had any complaint against this holy river, despite the fact that its water near the bank was thick and muddy with pollution. The river Buriganga was actually the main receptacle for the sewage and other filth of the whole town. The Dolai Khal served as the main nullah (drain), but there were small kacha nullahs near the old katras, which carried the filth down the whole length of the city. The meat and fish markets of the city along the river bank were another source of pollution for the river. In addition, thousands of people, some suffering from contagious diseases, used it every day for bathing themselves, cleaning and dyeing clothes, washing animals and utensils and submerging wholly or partially cremated bodies. Innumerable boatmen and passengers added to the pollution by throwing in kitchen garbage and relieving themselves directly into the river. Such conditions were not unique to Dacca. It was a general Indian situation. The Sabarmati in Ahmedabad and the Hoogly river in Calcutta, for example, were renowned for their filthiness. The pollution of rivers was equally widespread in Great Britain in the nineteenth century. The sewage of the towns and the refuse of industries turned the rivers Thames, Clyde, Mersey, Calder and others into such noisome streams that people could die from tumbling in and swallowing a dose of their waters.[31]

The water of the Buriganga was undoubtedly a source of disease to the people of Dacca. So was the water of

innumerable tanks, wells and ditches, as the soil of the whole urban site was 'contaminated with every species of impurity'.[32] Although the municipal authority was well aware of the danger of drinking impure water, it was not until 1879 that filtered water could be supplied even to the crowded city centre. It has been argued that, initially at least, the slow progress in this respect was not the fault of the municipal commissioners; it was not they, but the government Public Works Department which was entrusted with the task of constructing the water-works financed by the Nawabs and the Bengal Government.[33] However, the water-works were too small to meet the city's needs, and the commissioners and perhaps the engineers also had responsibility for selecting the areas which were to be favoured with clean water. Their decisions on how this vital service should be distributed seem to have been taken with scant regard to the principle of greatest need. The main streets were supplied with water in 1880[34] and the people living around them, namely craftsmen, traders, merchants, doctors, lawyers and teachers, benefited from it. Most of the government offices were also located near the main streets and so they too were able to take advantage of this improvement. The vast majority of the townspeople, though, were still in need of pure drinking water, no matter whether they themselves were aware of this need or not. The Nawab again made a public gesture of generosity in 1884, when he financed the 'Connaught extension', which brought the water pipelines from Nawabpur down to Thatari Bazar and Dilkhushbagh. This was the northern part of the city inhabited mainly by wealthy citizens and Europeans. Dilkhushbagh locally known as Dilkusha was also famous for being the 'garden house' of the Nawabs. The extension was nicely timed to commemorate the Duke of Connaught's visit to Calcutta. The Nawabs had previously financed some pipelines to celebrate Queen Victoria's assumption of the title of Empress of India.[35]

The open sycophancy of the Nawabs in dedicating

public utilities to British Royalty ended when the District Magistrates ceased to exercise direct control over the municipal boards in 1884 and Dacca obtained her first elected and non-official chairman. The only other major individual initiative and financial contribution for the water-supply came from Babu Madan Mohan Basak in 1886, when the water pipe-line was extended from the Nawabpur Crossing to Jorpool. Perhaps in keeping with the spirit of the new elective era, this banker, zamindar and trader refrained from dedicating the work to the British. Possibly for the same reason, the British never considered him worthy of a title. [36]

From 1884, the elected chairmen of Dacca Municipality tried to work this western semi-democratic institution in a stratified and authoritarian society. The laboriousness of the processes of democracy, coupled with the scanty resources of the municipality, perhaps caused a general slowing down in the provision of civic services, water most certainly. [37] Nature added to the problem. Like most of the rivers of Dacca District, the Buriganga threw up small chars (small sandbanks and islands) and washed them away from time to time. In 1893 :

> the main stream of the Buri Ganga receded and a chur began to form in front of the intake pipe (of the water-works). The length of the pipe was extended and a channel was dug through the chur in the dry season. But these expedients proved of no avail in the face of the constantly increasing size of the chur, and ultimately a new pumping station had to be erected on the further edge to drive the water across it through an open conduit into a pool from which it could be drawn by the main suction pipe. It was then felt that the time had come to remodel the whole system. The population had outgrown the available supply of water, the engines were old and expensive in their working and the supply of the unfiltered water pre-

carious and unsatisfactory. [38]

Thus the twentieth century opened with a strong and worried note by the chairman, Khwaja Yousuff Jan, in the annual report for 1899-1900. Along with the other services, the improvement of the water-supply in Dacca was, he said a matter of 'extreme importance' and urgency. Yousuff Jan was later regarded as a champion of the city's civic improvement. His report, read with the Sanitary Engineer's statement the following year, leaves little doubt that the piped water supplied to the people of Dacca at the turn of the century was neither adequate nor pure. [38A]

The enhanced political and administrative status of the city during the period 1905 - 1911, when it was the provincial capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam, gave a fresh boost to the expansion of the water-supply and other services. As the job opportunities expanded during this period, the population increased rapidly, making more demands on the municipal services. [39] Due to the sudden rise in the demand for private connections, a number of private houses were allowed to instal water taps, and a new scheme to improve the water-supply was undertaken and completed at the cost of five lakhs of rupees. It was largely financed by a government grant, money being more easily available during this period as a result of Dacca's newly gained importance. The old, overworked engine pumps and boilers supplying only 200,000 gallons of filtered water per day were somewhat relieved by the addition of two new and more powerful Worthington engine pumps and two Babcock and Wilcox boilers, each capable of supplying an extra 100,000 gallons of filtered water to the town daily. The old sand-filtered beds were replaced by five jewel filters, each capable of supplying 18,000 gallons per hour. During this period, the length of the street water-pipe lines increased rapidly: so also did the number of street hydrants. Although, at the Nawab's insistence, the water-supply was initially a free

service, the increasing demand for water, combined with a chronic shortage of municipal funds, forced the Municipality to impose a water rate. The tax was levied from 16 July 1910. It was fixed at the rate of five per cent on the gross rental value of holdings where there was a home connection, and two per cent where there was not, but a hydrant was within reach. This rate remained unchanged throughout the period under review. There was no dearth of objections to the water rate from the people, though they duly appreciated the improvements in the water-supply. B.C. Allen, the writer of the District Gazetteer, wrote:

> Much credit is due to the Chairman of the Municipality, Nawab Khwaja Mohammad Yusuf Khan Bahadur, for the tact and ability shown by him in bringing to a conclusion a scheme that was beset with many difficulties. 39A

But soon this active phase of the Municipality's existence came almost to a halt. What the anti-Partition agitation of the Hindu bhadralok and the terrorists of Bengal between 1905-1911 could not do to the Municipality, the annulment of Partition in 1911 did. It dealt a severe blow to the morale of the municipal commissioners. Khwaja Yousuff Jan, who had worked energetically as the Municipality's chairman throughout Dacca's shortlived glory in 1905-1911, took the blow of the loss of its prestige as seriously as the other members of the Nawab family. The sudden fall in its political importance cast a heavy gloom over Dacca which looked sad and abandoned with its large, smart, and now empty, buildings designed for government offices and governors during 1905-1911. The resultant despair felt by the Muslim elite of Eastern Bengal was reflected in the relative inactivity of Dacca Municipality under its shocked and saddened Muslim chairman. As the city was relegated to the position of a mere divisional headquarters, the generous flow of government grants also dried up, significantly curtailing the municipal services. The sudden enthusiastic outbursts of municipal activity in providing such needs as pure water whenever money was available demonstrate how far supply normally fell short of need. The following table

illustrates the unsteady increase in the number of water hydrants over seven decades:[40]

Year	No. of street hydrants	Increase	
1878	25	---	
1892-1893	129	104 in 15 years	116 in 31 years
1908-1909	141	12 in 16 years	
1909-1910	245	104 in 1 year	113 in 10 years
1918-1919	254	9 in 9 years	
1920-1921	306	52 in 2 years	
1926-1927	382	76 in 6 years	128 in 8 years
1930-1931	422	40 in 4 years	
1939-1940	675	253 in 9 years	
1940-1941	766	91 in 1 year	344 in 10 years

Although the population of the city in the municipal area increased from about 105,000 in 1909-1910 to about 117,000 by 1918-1919, the Municipality installed only four hydrants in those years to meet the extra demand - whereas they had built no less than 104 hydrants in the single year of 1909-1910. After the annulment of Partition the situation was hardly improved by the European war which began in 1914 and in which India, as a British colony, was unwillingly involved. The abnormal rise in the prices of commodities was faced grudgingly by an indigenous population which perhaps disapproved of the war because of the hardship caused by it. While the British Empire was absorbed in warlike activities, the question of giving generous grants to municipalities could not arise. Even in peacetime, few Indian municipalities could start projects without government help, and so improving civic services, out of meagre municipal funds alone, became an impossibility during wartime. Throughout India, therefore, a phase of inertia set in for local self-government.[41]

Before Dacca could recover from the inflation caused by the European war, it was severely hit by the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918 - 1919. Thousands of people were

afflicted by the disease in Dacca, and as many as 1,632 were reported to have died of it. To make matters worse, cholera and small pox broke out in epidemic form at about the same time, taking a heavy toll of lives. The shock of these epidemics woke up the Municipality of Dacca.[42] This coincided with the introduction of the Montagu - Chelmsford Reforms in the 1919 Government of India Act, which stimulated an active phase of life in a large number of Indian municipalities in the 1920 s. The Act brought new promises of a gradual transfer of power to Indians, and made local self-government, along with other subjects, the responsibility of elected Indian ministers. It made municipalities more autonomous by further increasing the number of elected commissioners in proportion to nominated ones and also broadening the franchise - thus making the municipal boards more representative of the people. Official control was somewhat relaxed, and municipal commissioners were given increased powers of taxation.[42A]

Apart from having a share in these democratic measures, along with the other municipalities in India, Dacca had special cause for rejoicing. The twenties started with the opening of the long-awaited University of Dacca. This cheered the city fathers who had been mourning over the annulment of the Partition of Bengal. The Municipality, under the chairmanship, first, of Khwaja Yousuff, then of Khwaja Nazimuddin - both members of the Nawab family - burst forth into a phase of enthusiastic activities to modernize the city's civic amenities. With the construction of residences for the teachers and officers and of students' halls in Ramna, and Nilkhet, the Municipality's workload also increased. It had already been supplying water to the civil station since 1905 and now by 1921 Dacca University also was added to the list of its responsibilities in the northern part of the city.[42B] The number of water hydrants in the streets increased rapidly, although the water pipelines expanded moderately. The Municipality normally did not have enough resources to increase the length of water pipelines as easily as it could increase the number of street

drants. Nevertheless, progress was more rapid even in this aspect of water supply, during the affluent periods, than in the decade between the annulment of Partition and the establishment of the University. The following table will illustrate the point:[43]

Year	Length of water-pipes (in miles)	Increase	
1878-	4½	---	
1908-1909	15	10½ in 31 years	
1909-1910	34	19 in 1 year	
1915-1916	37	3 in 6 years	4 in 10 years
1919-1920	38	1 in 4 years	
1920-1921	39	1 in 1 year	
1925-1926	45	6 in 5 years	8 in 6 years
1926-1927	47	2 in 1 year	
1930-1931	51	4 in 4 years	
1940-1941	51+	a few hundred feet in 10 years	

Although municipalities were becoming more representative, the implementation of schemes put forward by the boards or engineers for the improvement of municipal services still largely depended on the availability of government grants. Government backing was also very important for expediting the work. The Peelkhana extension can be cited as an example. In 1910, when the water pipe-line was extended to the Peelkhana Cantonment and the Civil Station, government funds were available. As the project was initiated and backed by government, it was undertaken and completed within a year. Government was sometimes less forthcoming when it came to providing funds for the Municipality's own projects, for which capital was not locally available. When a scheme for the improvement of the water-works was commenced by Dacca Municipality in 1917, it was only after several years and much correspondence with the local government, that it could be completed. It was not until 1920 that government at last overcame its suspicion and

sanctioned the necessary grants-in-aid. [44]

Both government and Municipality reacted more quickly and efficiently to the needs of the local elites than to the needs of the faceless masses. When the people of Wari complained about the low pressure of piped water in their area, a scheme was prepared by the Municipality and sanctioned by government within a year (1921 - 1922). The model suburb was mainly inhabited by English-educated professional elites, such as doctors, lawyers, teachers and government officials, and so a subsidiary main about 2,498 feet long was laid from Nawabpur to Wari to ease their problem.. [44A]

The regular outbreaks of cholera every year make it clear that the supply of filtered water fell far short of the people's needs. After the great epidemic of 1919, the most serious outbreak to afflict the city during the period under review occurred in 1927 - 1928. During this epidemic, 237 people were recorded to have died of cholera in the city. The number of deaths due to dysentery and diarrhoea was on the increase and this was indicative of a decline in the city's sanitary arrangements. An improvement in the water-supply was urgently necessary to improve public health in Dacca. [45] As municipal funds were insufficient to back a substantial scheme, government aid was sought as usual. Consequently, a major project to improve the supply of filtered water was prepared and partially executed by the Public Health Department during 1929 - 1930. The estimated cost was Rs 480,000, of which Rs 160,000 came from the government as a grant; the balance was made up by the Municipality, partly out of its own funds and partly in the form of a loan from government. [46]

This project extended the water pipe-lines substantial and increased the number of street hydrants. It also brought per capita supply of water to the maximum attained

Dacca before the partition of India in 1947, as the following table shows:[47]

Year	Average daily consumption of water (gallons)	Population	Per capita supply (gallons)
1909-1910	325,168	106,000	3.06
1920-1921	1,229,717	119,000	10.3
1925-1926	1,543,880	120,000	12,86
1930-1931	1,878,758	139,000	13.7
1940-1941	2,500,898	213,000	11.7
1946-1947	2,800,000	258,000	10.8

Nevertheless, the problem was not yet solved; the demand for water remained far in excess of the supply, despite the project undertaken by the Public Health Department. Pyarilal Das, chairman of the Municipality, had anticipated this as early as 1931, before the project's completion. In an extremely worried report, he stated:

> It appears that the anxiety of the Municipal Commissioners for the improvement of the water supply will not be wholly over even after the expenditure of nearly five lacs of rupees. In order to improve the scanty supply of water in some areas which is existing even after the Improvement Scheme, there appears to be a necessity of erecting two more elevated reservoirs. The full capacity of the engines is not being utilised in filling up the existing overhead tanks and hence there will be no difficulty in filling up two more tanks when erected... There are applicants coming forward for water connections to their houses and if the supply of water is improved further, more new connections can be allowed which means an increase of Municipal Revenue from the water rate. The Municipal Commissioners therefore hope that in view of the above facts, the Government, will kindly sanction further grants to the Municipality - for improvement of the water supply as indicated above. 48

Government did not react to the Municipality's demand immediately; indeed, it took a good ten years for governme aid to come to the Municipality. Unfortunately, Das had

not made his proposal at a propitious moment; costly municipal projects were not high on the government's list of priorities at this time. The world slump, coupled with political disruption all over India, reduced many municipalities to almost complete inactivity during the thirties. Then came World War II. Despite the protests of a large number of Indian political leaders, India was dragged into the war by the British Government. During and after the war, the Indian national movement achieved such overwhelming prominence that municipal services, along with many other matters in India, seemed completely unimportant. At the same time, prices were soaring, while government grants became more elusive than ever. Under these circumstances, no municipality could undertake important development projects in the years before Partition. During these years of stringency, it was difficult even to maintain public services properly. The chairman reported that the 'acuteness in the scarcity of water is still on the increase and extreme hardship is felt over a considerable portion of the town'.[49] Dacca faced a particularly grave crisis in its water-supply during the year 1939 - 1940 when suddenly the firms providing liquid chlorine and aluminium sulphate expressed their inability to continue supplies on account of the war. Because of its irregularity in paying its bills in the past, the Municipality was not in the firms' good books, and all its efforts to reach an agreement with them, whereby the water-supply could be ensured, failed. The situation grew so desperate that the local government had to intervene at the request of the municipal commissioners. In the end, disaster was successfully avoided through negotiations and official influence.[50]

A new project of water works improvement was started by the Municipality in 1935, the beneficiaries being Armanitola, Purana Paltan, Wari, Gandaria, Kasim Nagar, Narinda, Victoria Park area, Peel Khana and Mill Barracks. These were all either middle class residential areas or

official zones. Purana Paltan had started to emerge as a respectable middle class neighbourhood after the opening of Dacca University in 1921. Like Wari, it accommodated teachers, government officials and lawyers, Because of its close proximity to the University and the civil lines, it was attractive for development as a residential area. By 1938 it had become another bright spot in the newly developing Dacca with modern civic amenities whose improvement was, from 1938 to 1947, one of the major preoccupations of the Municipality. [51] The other areas which received serious attention after 1935 were the quarters of the Eastern Frontier Rifles in Peel Khana, police lines in Mill Barracks and other government buildings in Kasimnagar and Gandaria. [52] Although the main improvements took place in the affluent and influential areas, the municipal commissioners during the late thirties and forties became more conscious of the need to appeal to the ordinary citizens of Dacca.

The electorate had been expanded under the Bengal Municipal Act of 1932, while the Indian national movement was also gaining strength rapidly, making the electorate politically aware. The commissioners had to satisfy more people than ever - just in order to remain in power. This even affected the style of the chairmen's municipal reports. Thus when a tubewell, with the capacity to supply 11,000 gallons of water per hour, was installed at Narinda in 1940, with the financial help of the government, the chairman hastened to point out that the beneficiaries were the masses. He also claimed in his report that the:

> installation of this tube-well has greatly improved the hitherto unsatisfactory supply in Dayagonge and Narinda areas and partially so in some portions of Ekrampur area. 53

That the few hundred feet of water main laid in 'a hitherto undeveloped area near the Government Distillery in Gandaria'

in 1941 and the arrangements made for the construction of an elevated reservoir in Ward Number 11 had also been geared to the welfare of the poor people, was made clear by the Municipality in its annual administration report.[54] In the past, for obvious reasons, the chairmen had not taken the trouble to stress the socio-economic condition of the areas where municipal improvements were made.

However, these late measures could not establish the Municipality's reputation. Too much damage had already been done in the past by the introduction of spectacular amenities which failed to satisfy the hopes they had raised in people's minds. While the Municipality had been busy writing self-congratulatory reports about the various glorious measures they had taken to equip the city with modern civic amenities, the press and sanitary inspectors were telling quite a different story. Despite the Municipality's efforts to supply filtered water to the people, there was, year in, year out, a constant shortage of it. Many people therefore depended on well water. Nearly every premise in the city had a well, but they were mostly shallow and exposed to various sources of contamination. In the hot weather especially, the demand for water was very great but its supply was scanty. The water-pressure in the streets was usually low, which made the process of drawing water from street hydrants longer and harder. The water-taps were situated a long way from many of the bustees (slums). The result was inevitable. As a report explained:

> A large number of people who have to wait near the hydrants for a long time for water, being sick of attending the places prefer to get well and khal (canal) water being within their easy reach for bathing and other domestic purposes.[55]

When confronted with public accusations of inefficiency in providing essential services, the municipal authority usually gave one general excuse - shortage of funds. Faced with a militant deputation from Dacca Rate Payers Association in 1923, Khwaja Nazimuddin, one of the more well-known

municipal chairmen, explained what vexed problems the commissioners had to deal with. He assured the deputation that Dacca Municipality did what it could to improve the city's amenities, but that the department of water-supply was not self-sufficient. Expenditure over the ten years from 1913 to 1923 had increased by Rs 50,000. This heavy increase was not only due to the increase in supply from eight to fourteen lakhs of gallons daily, but also to the tremendous rise in the price of coal and alum which were used in the purification of water. In addition, a sum of Rs 34,400 was being paid as an annual instalment in repayment of loans incurred for the improvement of the water-works. On account of the huge deficit in the water funds, this entire sum had to be met from the general fund, with the result that roads and drains had to be starved of capital. [56]

There was no denying the fact that the supply of water was inadequate to the demand for it. But there was also a great deal of truth in the Municipality's belief that a large quantity of water was being wasted due to the negligence of the people. The problem, however, was not unique to Dacca, for there was a general lack of harmony between Indian social habits and modern western technology. As water was regarded as 'Nature's bounty', people did not feel guilty about failing to report burst watermains to the Municipality, or about keeping the water hydrants open till they ran dry. [57] The people of Dacca were probably not as selfish as the people of Cawnpore and Lucknow, who wasted a huge amount of water - estimated at 50 and 70 per cent respectively. [58] The only permanent way of stopping such carelessness would have been to remove illiteracy and create a public conscience and community spirit. This was clearly not within the power of the Municipality, Nor was there any way that the Municipality could bring the masses to book for misusing the public services, especially street hydrants. It seemed much easier to control the people who had private connections.

Therefore, following the advice of the local government, Dacca Municipality tried to instal meters in the houses with water connections. The metering system was introduced as early as 1913, in the hope of motivating the users not to waste water and also to open a new source of income for the perennially deficient water fund. But it was a forlorn hope. The system soon became a source of worry, inconvenience and financial loss to the Municipality rather than of income. People with connections bitterly resented this external control over their private use of water. Over nine years from 1913 to 1921, the Municipality could persuade only 209 householders out of 1,365 with private connections to instal water meters. Many householders, who had installed their connections before 1913, were especially opposed to the idea of metering regulations having a retrospective effect. Despite constant pressure from the Sanitary Engineer and the government, the Municipality failed to convince householders of the urgency of the matter. All houses receiving connections after May 1913, when the rules were framed by government, were obliged to accept meters, but those who already had connections remained obstinate, until, hard-pressed by government, the Municipality forced meters onto most of these as well. It could not, however, force them to pay for cost of installation, which totalled about Rs 60,000. [59]

Despite its failure to derive any benefit from metering private water connections, the Municipality did not stop granting house connections at people's request, because they still brought some income to the water fund.through the water-rate which remained fixed at five per cent throughout the period under review. There was a persistent demand for water connections from the people. But the Municipality could not properly utilize this opportunity to add to its revenue because the pressure in the watermains was too low in most areas of the city.[60] This was caused by the narrow diameter of the pipes, in most cases not exceeding 2" - 3". The problem was exacerbated by the Municipality's lack of

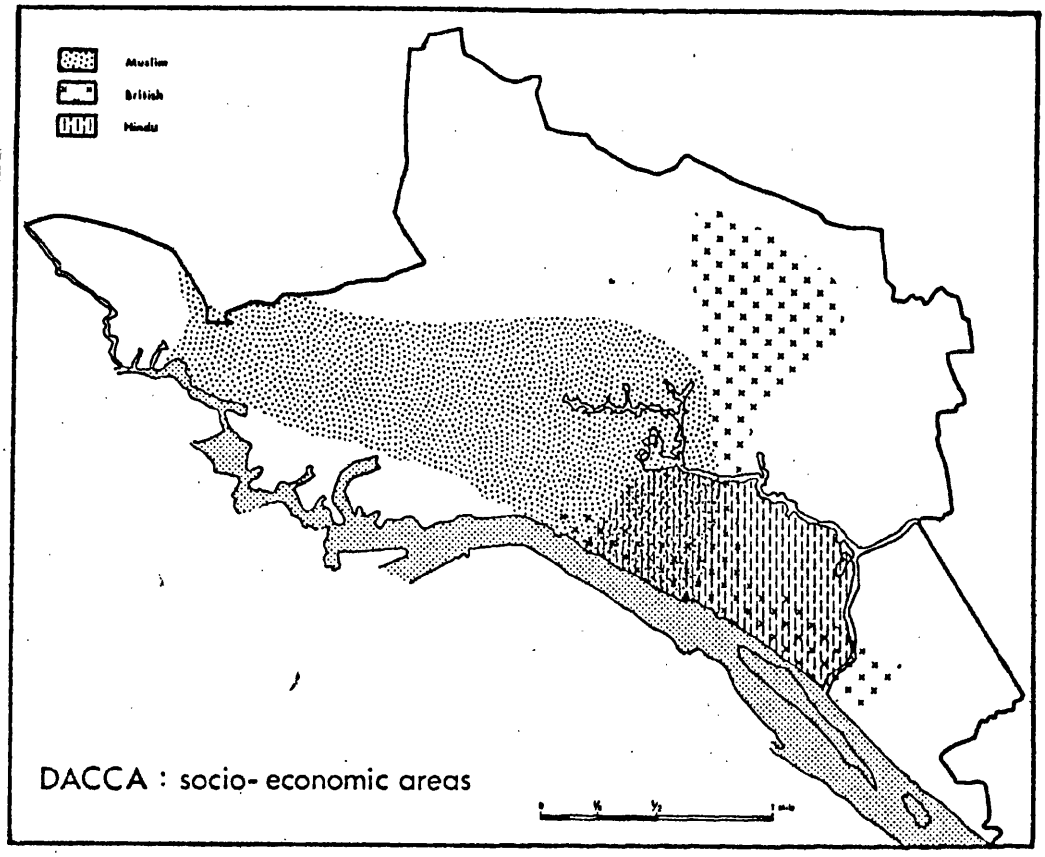
foresight - or overenthusiasm - in providing many more house connections than the service reservoirs could balance, with the result that, in the most crowded areas of the city, the reservoirs were generally dry by 8.30 in the morning. It was only possible, therefore, to grant new connections in localities which had good pressure - which were the relatively affluent areas of Wari, part of Gandaria and part of Narinda.[61]

In the forties, commual politics had a direct effect on the municipal services, Tensions created by extreme communal politics frequently broke out in the form of violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims in various parts of India. Dacca, which had been a hotbed of such tensions since the first Partition of Bengal in 1905, witnessed a series of clashes between the two communities.until in the forties they had become an everyday nuisance. In March 1941, communal riots broke out in Dacca just as the Municipality started laying a main to connect Narinda's tube-well with the reservoir of Victoria Park. This kind of work had to be done during the non-supply hours, which were officially from 10.a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. It was more convenient to work during the day than at night. But all work had to be stopped when the riots broke out.[62] From 1941 until the Partition of India in 1947, the city was never completely free from commual riots.

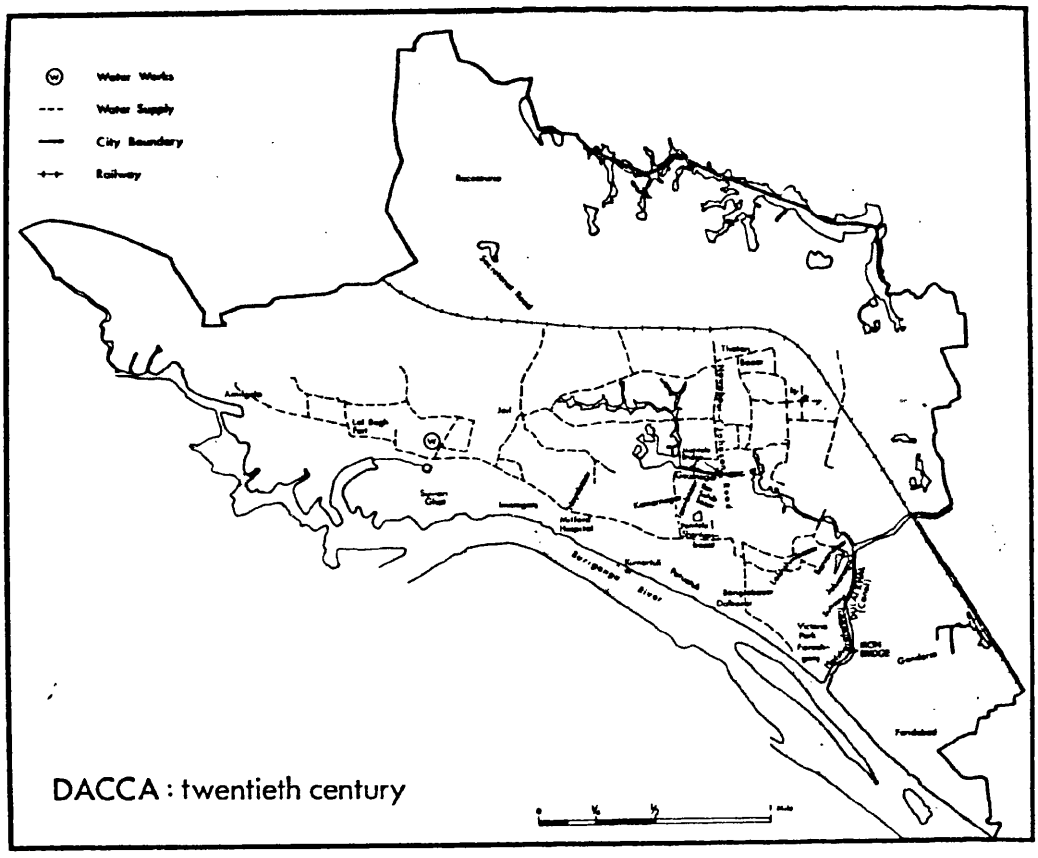
The acquisition of land for laying water pipes or the construction of reservoirs posed no less a problem than the shortage of municipal funds or the commual riots. People showed little readiness to co-operate when the building of a public utility demanded even a nominal sacrifice from them. The progress of the water-works was often hampered considerably as a result of the long time it took for land acquisition proceedings to mature in the face of vehement opposition from the parties likely to be affected.[63]

Although the supply of filtered water in Dacca was unsatisfactory, as it was also in the greater metropolis of

MAP 6



MAP 7



Source for Maps 6 and 7: Adapted from the Survey and Settlement Map of the City of Dacca, 1912 - 15.

Calcutta, and its purity at times unsatisfactory, despite the regular bacteriological tests carried out in the Dacca Public Health Laboratory, it is undeniable that the Municipality took the question of water-supply more seriously than most other services. The fact that water-supply always constituted the second or third most expensive item of the municipal budget proves the point.[64]

The purpose of the water-works was to improve the sanitation and health of the crowded city centre. It is therefore of interest to see how the network of mains was laid out by the municipal authorities. This may be traced, with occasional uncertainties, from the 1912 - 1915 city map which marks the public hydrants at which the urban masses drew water. There were of course piped connections to private houses, but these were less important than the hydrants for the bulk of the inhabitants.[65]

The water-works was sited near Lalbagh Fort, at the highest point upstream for an intake from the Buriganga. Two lines ran westward through Atosh Khana, Amligola and Sheikh Saheb Bazar. They stopped short, however, of the densely populated Hazaribag, Nazirbag, Inayetganj, Nawabganj, Kasimnagar, Baghsainuddin and Chaudhuribazar areas. These districts were mostly inhabited by poor people like horn carvers, country soap makers and so on.

Eastward from the water-works, apart from a northern line which provided amply for the Central Jail, four main lines fanned out from the Chauk, roughly parallel to the course of the river. One followed the Islampur (Water-works, Mitford, Farashganj) Road to the outskirts of Farashganj, where it stopped. From here another branch took off to run through the particularly congested Sankhari Bazar area to Victoria Park, the Roman Catholic Church and School compounds, and back in a loop through Lakshmi Bazar, with a spur north from Sankhari Bazar, skirting Tanti Bazar to cross the Dolai Khal by the Malitola Bridge into Malitola itself.

North of the Islampur Road, the second arm of the fan ran from the Jail round the two sides of the Training College to the Municipal Market. The third arm, still further north, ran along Bangshal Road to Nawabpur Road, along which it turned first south and then west again along Cemetery Road to Wari 'suburb', to loop back through Goalpara and also further north, through Thathari Bazar. There it met, on the Nawabpur Road, the last arm of the fan which had run through the much less dense Aga Sadek Bazar, Siddir Bazar, Alu Bazar and Sankhanidhi Market areas south of the railway.

The pattern which the water mains made was obviously dictated in part by topography and engineering convenience. North of the Hindu city within the Dolai Khal, there was a mass of waterways, sometimes quite broad. Their presence required that the mains stopped when they reached them, went round them, or crossed them, where they narrowed, by the rare bridges. Thus the second arm of the fan stopped when it reached the spreading waterway at the municipal market, the third crossed it at the Bangshal Road bridge and the fourth went round it to the north.

Engineering problems demanded that where possible the mains should follow straight roads. The turns and twists of the alleyways and lanes of the dense old quarters and the bazars formed a serious obstacle with their constant junctions and corners. Whereas the electricity poles could zigzag their way above ground from Pannitola to Rai Saheb Bazar, the line of hydrants rarely attempted to leave the main roads.

However, it also appears that means and influence played a more noticeable part than need in dictating the areas to be supplied with water. Religion does not seem to have been important as a determining factor - except perhaps in the case of the short run of piping to a hydrant to serve the Jam-e-Masjid. Of course, the fact that religion and caste were closely associated with occupation does mean that, where occupations had high or low economic status, then allocation of amenities by income groups can take on an indirect communal

or caste colouring. As in other cities of India, caste and occupation groups often remained together instead of moving into the less crowded parts of the town. It was, then, areas with a high proportion of thatched houses - Faridabad or Kalta Bazar, for example, - which were quite without water hydrants, as were Halsharafatganj and Sutrapur Market in the eastern end of the old Hindu area of the city. There were two hydrants in the wealthy businessmen's Dal Bazar quarter in the main Farashganj Road, but none in the very congested Farashganj area proper. There is, in fact, a most striking contrast between the low income areas of Shankhari Bazar - the conch shell cutters' quarter - and the congested areas of Tanti Bazar, Kamarnagar, Goalnagar, Pannitola and Sutranagar, all of which shared three hydrants, and the model suburb of Wari, with its straight roads and large compounds, which had nine hydrants for scarcely a hundred houses. The prejudice of the Municipality became more obvious when, in the twenties, the water pressure in Wari was improved by laying a long subsidiary main, while no relief was given to the majority of people living in the crowded part of the city, who had long been suffering from the consequences of low water pressure. Dhaka Prokash, a local popular bi-weekly newspaper, frequently voiced its indignation at the biased actions of the Municipality. In 1923, it pointed out how badly the residents of the Thathari Bazar district had been suffering from the scarcity of water, the street hydrants and private water connections running dry long before the usual time.[66]

That developments in subsequent years followed similar lines is indicated by Dr. S.N. Sur's inspection report on Dacca Municipality in 1938. He mentioned that Wards III and IV, with roughly equal populations, had 114 and 68 water hydrants respectively;[67] there was no apparent reason for the discrepancy except that Ward III was a respectable area, due to the inclusion within it of the expensive Wari 'suburb', whereas Ward IV was not. The District Gazetteer remarked:

> Nothing in fact could be greater than the contrast between the amenities of Wari and the squalid discomfort of the remainder of the town'. [68]

Similarly, it was the exclusive Purana Paltan and the fashionable shopping area of Nawabpur on which the Municipality concentrated its efforts to improve the water supply in the 1940s. In both areas, it was Dacca's elites who benefited. [69]

The trend set in those days and the problems faced by the people have hardly changed in Dacca even three decades after the subcontinent became independent. The striking similarity between past and present conditions in the city is illustrated by the following newspaper report about the water-supply in Dacca in 1977:

> Large areas of the Dacca city have been in the throes of inadequate water supply since long. WASA (Water and Sewerage Authority) could hardly meet the 60 per cent of the total daily requirement of the city. The age-old water supply system in the city areas remains more or less static... The number of water hydrants in the old city is 1400... (but a) huge quantity of water is wasted through the taps which have no nozzles.
>
> Parts of Elephant Road, Circular Road, College Street, North-South Road, Gopibagh, Maghbazar, Indira Road and Santinagar are areas of niggardly water supply. In Shaheed Salimullah Road, Iqbal Road, Razia Sultana Road and Nurjahan Road water supply has been irregular for quite a long time. Also breakdown of supply in some of these areas is chronic. ... In many cases pressure of water is so low that people do not get water even in the first floor. ... A consumer at Shahjahanpur area told me that water did not reach the roof top of his one-story house water tank. He and his neighbours have to depend on an almost earth-level water tap. He said that there also water fell in trickles. It took quite a time and patience to fill a small bucket. ...
>
> Water meters have not been introduced in the old city area.
>
> There are 22,617 water connections in the city out of which 19,344 meters have so far been installed in the new city areas (affluent areas). ...
>
> There are complaints that water bills are not regularly sent to the consumers and in some cases they

> get accumulated bills. It is alleged that due to the shortage of meter readers only 50 per cent of the meter reading is done normally every month. This has resulted in huge arrear of bills other than non-payment of bills by the consumers...
>
> WASA had a grandiose scheme for the construction of a water treatment plant in the early seventies which could not be materialised so far. .. WASA authorities said that for want of adequate finance, they could not implement the project. Meanwhile delays have now inflated the project cost by at least 200 per cent.[70]

Electricity Supply

Whereas the water-works were sited in the old Mughal centre of the city, the power station, built a quarter of a century later, was located in a new, northern suburb called Hatir Pul (Elephants' Bridge). This was indicative of a growing trend to concentrate development towards the north of the city, around the European settlements.[71] On 7 December 1901, after a ceremonial evening party at Ahsan Manzil, the Nawab's Palace, Mr. Bolton, the Officiating Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, opened the electric installation by pressing a lever and bringing light to the city.[72] Of course, before the close of the nineteenth century, Dacca had already been dimly lit by kerosene lamps hanging from lamp posts in the main streets, at Wiseghat, Chauk Bazar and the crowded city centre.[73]

Lighting the streets of Dacca had first been recommended in 1868 by the Civil Surgeon, Dr. Cutcliffe;[74] his suggestion did not bear fruit until a decade later, in 1878, when Rs 6,445 was subscribed by the public. This money was actually part of the fund raised from the public by a committee formed to celebrate Queen Victoria's proclamation as Empress of India. The original intention had been to open a park in the town, but ultimately the committee decided to offer a portion of the fund to the Mitford Hospital and the rest to the Municipality to light the city. The Municipality accepted the offer and also the condition attached, that the maintenance of the lamps and the lamp posts would be its own responsibility.

The city was originally illuminated in 1878 by sixty kerosene lamps of the 'Cawnpore model'.[75] By 1887, their number had increased to 145, and by the beginning of the new century in 1900, the town had 402 oil lamps in its streets. The Municipality did not have enough staff to see to the actual lighting of the lamps and so it was done through contractors. As the price of oil was high, the Municipality could not afford to keep the city lit at night throughout the year. Initially, the lamps were lighted for the whole night only for five months a year when the moon was on the wane. But as an economy measure, the Municipality decided in 1897 to restrict all-night lighting to three months.[76] Kerosene lamps had their own disadvantages too. They could not hold their own against strong winds, and 'the city was regularly plunged into darkness'.[77]

There was, therefore, a strong need for better lighting arrangements and, as with the water-supply, the need was met through the spectacular munificence of the Nawabs of Dacca. In order to celebrate his father's title of K.C.S.I., conferred by government, Nawab Ahsanullah Bahadur offered in 1887 to replace the oil lamps of the main streets with gas lights at his own expense. In a public statement he explained:

> The enthusiasm displayed by our own fellow townsmen on the occasion of my father's investiture with the insignia of a Knight Commander of the Star of India has so touched and gratified me that as a token of the appreciation of the good feeling shown today by both Mohammedans and Hindus of Dakka, I propose to light such main roads and streets of the city as are now lighted with oil lamps, with gas, entirely at my own cost, and to maintain the works free of all costs, on the sole condition that the Municipality will, on their part, undertake to expend, on improved sanitation and the purchase and maintenance of fire engines, the sum, that they now expend on lighting the town. 78

A period of confusion and indecision followed. The Municipality could not decide what to do with the money that would be released from the fund then used for kerosene

lighting in the main streets. Among a number of suggestions, such as spending the money on a fire engine, sanitary improvements or the extension of the embankment of the Buriganga river, the Nawab favoured extending the Buckland Bund up to Mitford Hospital, provided the extension was named 'Nawab's Bund'. None of these ideas materialized. The Nawab himself changed his mind after a while and proposed to light the city, not with gas, but with electricity instead. Arrangements for power supply were accordingly made with Messrs. Octavius Steel and Company. Thus a new electric era started in the city streets of Dacca in 1901,[79] making Dacca the second city in Bengal to provide the most modern available means of street lighting. Darjeeling was the only other town in the Province with electricity before 1900. Howrah's electric lights date from 1913 and the remaining towns in Bengal from 1923 onwards. Although Dacca was reasonably advanced in this respect, the old tradition of oil lamps did not die. On the contrary, 91 more keroseme lamps were added over the following decade, bringing their total number to 458 by 1910.[81]

The number of electric lamps increased every year and by 1920 - 21 it had reached 268 - two and a half times as many as those first installed in 1901. Over the same period, though, the number of oil lamps had also increased enormously, to 525.[82] In the early twenties, the Municipality decided to extend electric lighting to the Buckland Bund. This was the most popular gathering place of middle class people who wished to take morning and evening strolls along the river front. At a cost of Rs 3,000, electric lights were first installed on the Bund in 1921.[83] Although public demand for lighting was not as pressing as water, both the kerosene and electric lights increased, to 746 and 396 respectively, by 1926 - 27.[84] Between 1923 - 1930, the number of electric lights almost quadrupled, raising the recurring cost of maintaining them, but the annual contribution received from the Electric Light Trust Fund remained at Rs 7,200 only. The Municipality appealed for an increased grant to the President of the Trust, who was also the Divisional Commissioner.[85] He did not accede to their demand, but nevertheless the number of electric lights continued to increase until at last, by 1935, they

had surpassed the number of oil lamps - the figures being 1,066 and 869 respectively.[86]

By 1939 - 40, the number of electric lights had risen to 1,315 and there were 1,063 kerosene lamps, while the expenditure, which had been Rs 49,067 ten years previously, had gone up to Rs 64,229.[87] The following table indicates the growth of oil lamps and electric lights in the streets of Dacca for half a century from their recorded beginning up to 1947:[88]

Year	Number of oil lamps	Number of electric lights
1878	60	None
1886-1887	145	None
1899-1900	402	None
1900-1901	---	107
1908-1909	455	---
1909-1910	458	---
1920-1921	525	268
1926-1927	746	396
1929-1930	779	691
1930-1931	763	742
1934-1935	869	1,066
1939-1940	1,063	1,315
1940-1941	1,071	1,333
1946-1947	1,070	1,370

The extension of lights to different parts of the city was adversely affected after 1939 by the abnormal rise in the price of poles, copper wires and other accessories as a result of the outbreak of war in Europe, but this was partly compensated by the contract system which was still in existence and was cheaper than the departmental system. However, with an annual charge of two rupees nine annas per oil light, the contract rates were so low that it was impossible for the contractors to provide regular labour and good oil.[89] Their services became even more irregular during the communal riots of the forties. Lighting contracts had always been a Hindu monopoly in Dacca and the contractors' Hindu employees did not dare to go into a Muslim-majority

area with a sizeable proportion of Muslims during these riots. Therefore, streets with kerosene lights frequently remained dark when there were commual disturbances.[90] The extension of electric lighting was also badly affected, like the water-supply, by commual riots during the forties; in the years 1940 - 41 and 1946 - 47, only very limited extensions could be made. [91]

During the war, Dacca Municipality tried to cut the spiralling cost of electricity supply by a Resolution that, for 84 nights in a year, there should be no street lighting, as these were moonlit nights, and for the rest of the year, lights should be on only for the darkest part of the night. The Divisional Commissioner, however, strongly objected to such measures, arguing that they were repugnant to the Defence of India Rules. On his orders, the Dacca Electricity Supply Company refused to comply with the Municipality's instructions. The Municipality, though, did find an opportunity to take revenge. As there was no air-raid siren in the city, the local government requested the Municipality to signal an air raid warning by dipping the lighting. This entailed an extra cost which the Municipality flatly refused to pay. The Divisional Commissioner intervened to settle this dispute and agreed that the additional expense would be borne by government. [92]

Even in normal times, however, the expenditure on street lighting was much beyond the means of the Municipality. The money was therefore obtained from the funds reserved for the other vital services and the fixed contribution from the Electric Trust Fund. Although street lighting absorbed such a sizeable proportion of the municipal expenditure every year, the civic body was not able to charge individuals or the public any lighting rate until 1948, when the terms of the Nawab's Electric Trust were altered. Lighting accounted for the following percentages of the total municipal expenditure in Dacca city over a few decades:

Year	Percentage of total expenditure
1901	3.7
1911	2.8
1921	6.1
1931	8.3
1941	8.1
1947	1.4

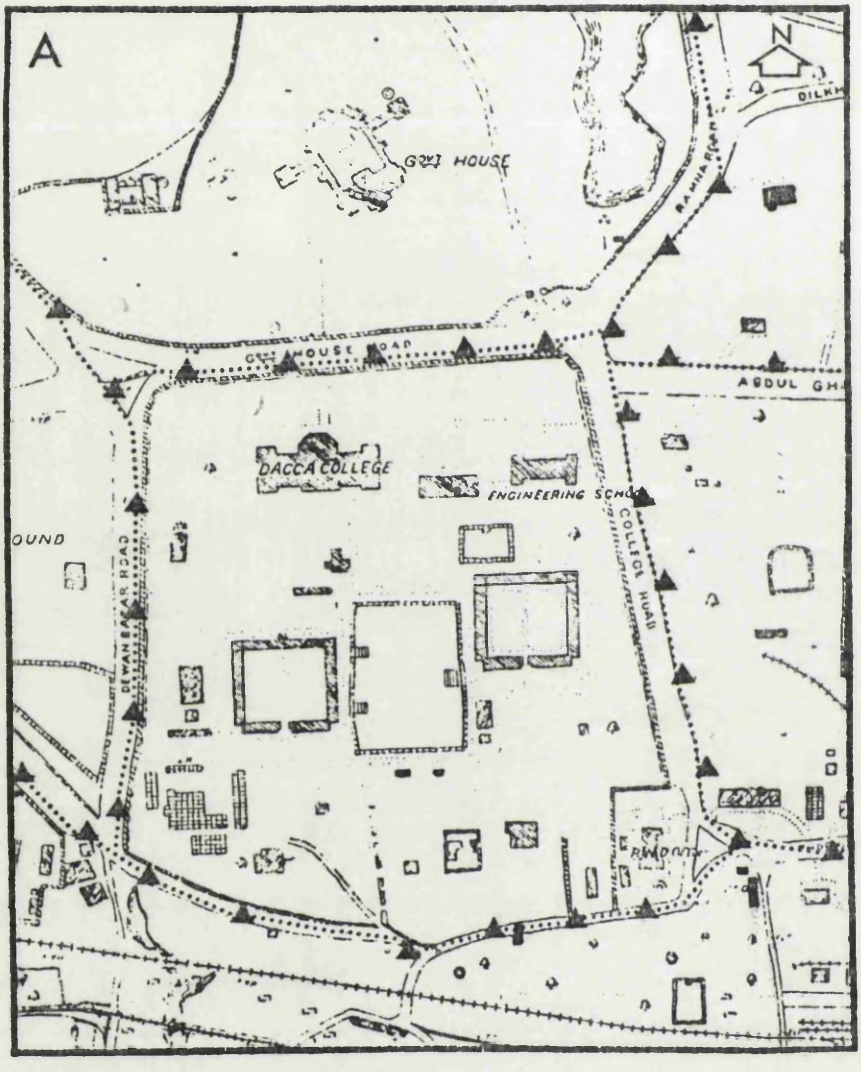
1911 and 1947 are two abnormal years. In 1911, the Municipality undertook major expenditure on water supply and sewerage which consequently brought down the proportions of expenditure on other items such as street lighting. In 1946 - 47 communal riots in the wake of Partition halted normal activities of the Municipality.[93]

Street lighting was supposed to have public safety as its civic purpose. But the maldistribution of lighting was visible at night. Then the vast circuit of the empty race-course away to the north-west, Secretariat Road (in front of which was now Dacca University), the surroundings of Government House, of the Rest House, of Curzon Hall and of the Engineering School formed a great pool of glittering light. From there ran a thin thread of light southward along Nawabpur Road, to a second, rather less imposing, pool round the Courts, the educational institutions and Victoria Park, spreading out east along Municipal Road beyond the Roman Catholic Church, and south in front of Ahsan Manzil between Farashganj and the river. From there, westwards upstream virtually the whole city was dark or dimly oil-lit, making the darkness more visible, except for the line of bulbs along Mitford Road, which terminated at the lamp posts around the Chauk Bazar. A few lamp posts around the crowded Chauk contrasted with the large cluster around the almost empty Bank of Bengal, Collegiate School and Victoria Park compounds and the largest number of them round the race course and Curzon Hall, largely unpopulated areas.[94] Until the late twenties the nearby Purana Paltan area, with oil-lit hurricane lamps in people's houses and no lights in the streets, looked like a jungle at night, lit only by

MAP 8A

TWENTIETH CENTURY DACCA

SUPPLY OF ELECTRICITY IN THE NORTH OF THE CITY



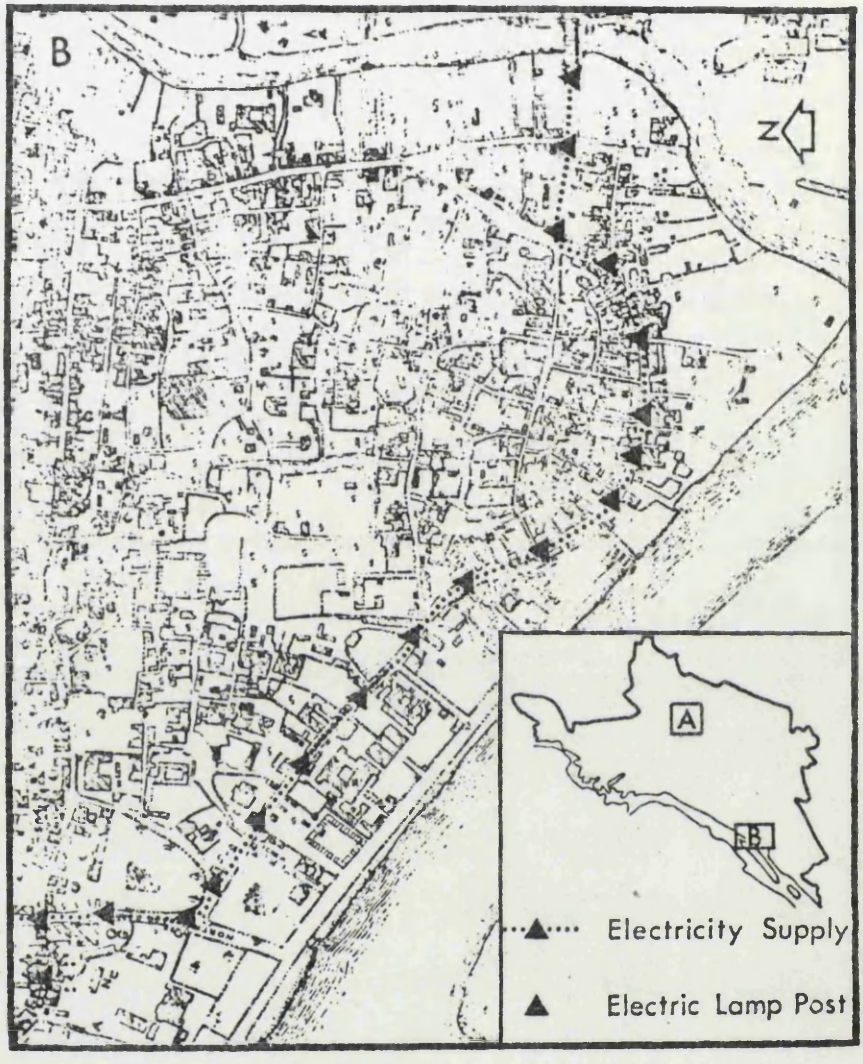
DACCA : supply of electricity

Source for Maps 8A and 8B: Adapted from the Survey and Settlement Map of the City of Dacca, 1912 - 15.

MAP 8B

TWENTIETH CENTURY DACCA

SUPPLY OF ELECTRICITY IN THE SOUTH OF THE CITY



flickering fireflies.[95] Electric street lighting may have seemed a frivolous amenity, especially when there was one policeman on the payroll for every 35 adult male citizens of Dacca.[96] It was also, however, important as a symbol of modernization for urban Dacca, the only city in rural Eastern Bengal.

Sanitary Condition of Dacca

Like nineteenth century English cities, the contemporary Indian cities were also in a state of confusion as regards their sanitary conditions - the important difference being that whereas the former were able to plan and spend their way out of the muddle eventually, the latter were not.[97] There was no dearth of theoretical propositions, planning and advice in India, but one vital commodity was lacking - money to realize the ideas. The problems these cities had faced in the nineteenth century remained virtually unchanged in the twentieth. The magnitude of the problems varied according to size, extent of industrialization and density of population. Calcutta, for instance, was the greatest city in India, in terms of area, population and industrialization. And it was no coincidence that it was also the filthiest. Calcutta was famous for its narrow lanes filled with the 'rankest compounds of villainous smells' in the last century,[97A] and it is still equally famous for its overcrowded and insanitary slums, beggars and disease. In fact, Calcutta exemplifies the conditions of all the large Indian cities which grew up haphazardly over the years until the magnitude of their municipal problems were beyond any control. The horrors of Calcutta were described by a late nineteenth century health officer in the following terms

> (it) is impossible to conceive a more perfect combination of all the evils of crowded city-life, with primitive filthiness and disorder, than is presented in the native portion of Calcutta. Dirt, in the most intense and noxious forms that a dense population can produce, covers the ground, saturates the water,

> infects the air, and finds in the habits and incidents of the people's lives, every possible facility for re-entering their bodies, while ventilation could not be more shunned in their houses, than it is, if the climate were arctic, instead of tropical. [98]

The bustees (slums) of Calcutta and of other Indian cities were, and still are, the real danger spots. The open drains and cesspools of the congested and poorer quarters were the breeding grounds of various diseases which easily spread to the other areas of the cities. The tropical climate aggravated the dangers, but the overcrowded English cities faced the same problems, with epidemics radiating out from the poor districts. Many houses in London had cesspools under them, in some recorded cases as much as nine feet across and six and a half feet deep, containing '58½ cubic feet of fermenting filth of the most poisonous, noisome and disgusting nature'. These and the open house-drains and sewers were 'the sources of fatal and wide-spreading fevers' in London. [99]

Although Dacca was a pigmy in comparison with London and Calcutta, and its industrialization was microscopic during the British colonial period, it nevertheless had a reputation for squalor and congestion in the old Hindu and Mughal areas. A nineteenth century Collector of the District gave a graphic description of the city:

> Dacca has long been famed for its filth, and in this respect undoubtedly bore away the palm even from that town of odoriferous celebrity - the ancient city of Cologne. .... At present the sanitary condition of the town varies in different localities. The main thoroughfares and places of public resort are, as a rule, clean and well kept, as are also the streets in the neighbourhood of the river; it is in the back streets and unfrequented by-lanes and alleys in the centre of the town that nuisances are still rife; and here many very objectionable localities are still to be found. In many places the proprietors of houses have built masonry drains, totally regardless of the fact that they have no outlet. As a natural consequence these drains become stagnant channels filled with rubbish. ... The houses of the wealthy are not much better

> than those of the poorer classes as regards conservancy arrangements. In most spouts may be seen in the outer wall from which the sewage and filth from the upper storeys dribbles down to the ground below, leaving in its passage down the wall a horrible coagulated mass of abomination, often more than an inch thick. [100]

This could have been applied to any city in India. Indeed, Dacca was better off than Calcutta, where the overcrowding surpassed all known limits in India. Virtually every inch of Calcutta was built up and in many areas people lived, like the inhabitants of pre-war East London, in small and ill-ventilated rooms. The problems of markets, dairies, slaughter houses, tanneries, conch-shell cutting, soap boiling and other commercial and industrial nuisances in Dacca were also formidable. The habits of the people added to the insanitation caused by normal urban overcrowding and other factors. The custom of dumping household rubbish behind houses is so deep-seated in the subcontinent that it is difficult to find a house which does not have a growing heap of rubbish behind it. As a logical consequence of such living, city dwellers were:

> too much accustomed to bad smells to hasten the removal from their premise of any matter that is in a state of decomposition... The streets and lanes of the roads were covered with filth, dust, mud or offal; and periodically coolies came round as scavengers, to stir up rather than remove the accumulated mess in the Kennels, and to send up into the surrounding houses, fresh loaded pestiferous air to be pent up there in so many dungeons. [101]

The Royal Army Sanitary Commission's Report in the nineteenth century on 'the appalling dirt and disease of many Indian towns'[102] acted as an eye-opener to the British Government. When, therefore, municipalities were formally established in Indian towns during the second half of the last century, conservancy and draining received more attention than other civic functions. Dacca was legally empowered in 1870 to tax the people for conservancy services provided by the Municipality. The idea was totally alien

and repugnant to the people. They were not prepared to pay taxes to provide for the cleansing of their privies, and so the law could not be implemented for a long time. When in 1878 all first class municipalities were required by law to have a conservancy establishment and to make the scavenging tax compulsory, Dacca Municipality was at last able to fix a privy tax at two per cent of the rental value of the property annually. The tax was imposed in 1879, in the teeth of bitter opposition from the ratepayers.[103]

Using the existing laws and bye-laws, the Municipality set about the task of improving the city's sanitation in the 1880s. Many obnoxious well-privies were closed and attempts were made to control river pollution in Dacca, but the improvements fell far short of the needs of the city. By 1885, the Municipality had provided twelve public latrines and five urinals for over 80,000 people in the municipal area[104] and twenty years later the number of public latrines still had not increased.[105] As an improvement on well-privies, gumla privies (bucket latrines) were introduced in Dacca.[106] These however, were useless unless the buckets were regularly emptied and this required the opening up of passages by which the methors or sweepers could reach the house latrines. These, unfortunately, were normally without access from outside, and the people resisted all efforts to make them accessible as a violation of their privacy and even more of the purdah or seclusion of their womenfolk. In this field also, then, the Municipality's achievement was minimal. That even the substitution of gumlas for wells was not a satisfactory arrangement is made clear by the report of A.E. Silk, Bengal Sanitary Engineer, in 1899:

> The Municipal Commissioners are paying a great deal of attention to the opening out of passages to enable methors to go in and clean out the numberless private latrines with which Dacca is cursed. I examined several of these newly-made passages and a more sickening sight I have never seen, and what the condition of things was before these passages were opened is simply unimaginable: latrines crowded together in every possible corner and almost on every available

> piece of ground; night soil coming down masonry shoots on to the road; earthen gumlas full to the brim with night soil. Since I have been Sanitary Engineer I have seen a good deal of the filth of the big municipalities of Bengal, but never has it been my lot to have to inspect anything so revolting as I have seen in Dacca; and I can say that the present state of affairs reflects the greatest discredit on the former municipal Commissioners, and the present Commissioners have to face a Herculean task.
>
> A vast improvement has been effected by opening up these passages, but the privies must be improved. At present all faeces are discharged into large open earthern gumlas which are too big for the methors to lift and empty into the buckets or carts, and the result is that the faecal matter has to be taken out by hand - a more disgusting and loathsome practice can scarcely be imagined, and being so, it can hardly be expected that it should be efficiently carried out. 107

Having so vividly described the condition of the privies after 'a vast improvement' had been made on them by the Municipality, Silk suggested some more modifications which he thought were urgently needed:

> It was represented to me that large receptacles were a necessity, but in my opinion the owners of those privies should provide a number of buckets of a size that can be handled and tilted at once into the carts or night soil receptacles.
>
> In narrow lanes night soil buckets holding 12 to 14 gallons, i.e. twice the quantity of the ordinary wooden bucket, and mounted on wheels would probably be found most convenient. These buckets could be wheeled to some central position and lifted bodily out of their carriages and placed into a large specially constructed cart holding six or eight buckets and drawn by bullocks. These have been found most successful in Patna.
>
> Another suggestion I would make is that the whole of the trees and jungle along these newly-opened passages be immediately removed, so that the sun and air may find their way into what must be nothing but hot-beds of disease and filth for some years to come.
>
> I am perfectly certain that the conservancy of Dacca will never be satisfactory as long as it is carried out at night; it is the only town as far as I know, where this system prevails. In all other municipalities the cleaning of privies and removing of night soil is commenced about 4 a.m. and should be ended by 8 or 9 a.m. 108

Clearing the jungles around the methor passages was an easier task than opening the passages, the latter operation involving long-drawn struggles between the Municipality and householders determined to protect the sanctity of their women's purdah. Once this had been done, even the most conservative citizens could not resent the removal of jungle as a further intrusion on their privacy. Silk's suggestion, that the times for removing night soil should be changed, was seriously considered and long debated but, in the face of the same objections, of preserving women's purdah, the Municipality could not see its way to taking any action until after 1947. [109]

Improving the methods of removing night-soil from the city and the question of what to do with it thereafter were both problems with difficult solutions, demanding substantial expenditure for which funds were not readily available. Dumping [110] the night soil successfully within the city was not easy either, since Dacca was becoming increasingly congested in many areas and the dumping depots were right in the middle of the residential areas. [111] Besides being unhygienic, this was a positive nuisance to the public. The conservancy subcommittee had suggested that a number of new depots should be established in the heart of the city, but the local government and the European community were in favour of dumping the night soil far away from the city. As the Municipality did not take up this

suggestion, or make any alternative arrangement, the sanitary problems of Dacca were almost overwhelming by 1905:

> The population of Dacca is over 90,000. There are 13,000 private and 12 public latrines on the registers, and it is estimated that about 22,000 people are not provided with conveniences of any sort. The soil of 8,000 privies is more or less removed and the remainder from one cause or another is inaccessible. The custom in Dacca is to build houses in blocks back to back with a courtyard in the centre. At the back of the courtyard the privies open on to a central channel by means of which they are served. In some cases 50 or 100 latrines open on to a single passage, and it is frequently so narrow that it is hardly possible for a man to crawl along by placing his feet on the slippery ledges on either side between the wall and the drain, and the ends of the passage may even be closed up by houses so that there is no possible entrance. It is needless to say that the sewage from these latrines has never been removed and has in the course of years collected until it stands considerably above the level of the courtyards. I have seen some of these unopened passages from the roofs of the adjoining houses. Their condition is indescribably filthy even in the cold season. People complained to me that in the rainy season the sewage flows back into their houses. [112]

The night soil was brought in wooden barrels on bullock carts by the Municipality's methors to the dumping depots. But the existing depots were not able to cope with the filth produced in Dacca. Even the largest one which was in Miranjalla in Ward IV, was also too small to contain the night soil of the neighbouring areas, while wooden barrels were not the most appropriate containers. A change in the method of removing the city's filth was urgently needed. It finally came in January 1910 when a tramway line was opened to carry night soil from the city to a village called Adabo, about five miles from the Miranjalla depot. [113]

The whole working system of the Conservancy Department was remodelled at the same time. Iron barrel-carts replaced the old wooden barrel-carts. Three locomotives, capable of doing ten miles per hour each, now took over the ricketty bullocks' job. The tramlines were only about five miles

long; nevertheless, the introduction of a tramway seemed to represent a step forward, towards the modernization of the new capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam.[114]

However, it soon proved to be an unwise venture. On the one hand, the tramway was unreasonably expensive and on the other, the line could not stand the pressure of trains under the difficult soil conditions of east Bengal. As the area around Dacca was low-lying and crossed by numerous waterways, including the river Buriganga, the soil was particularly soft. Inevitably, the tramline started to sink. The Municipality understood that it was urgently necessary to replace the heavy iron sleepers with wooden ones, but it lacked the money and initiative to remedy the ills. During the heavy monsoon of 1911, the rails sank so deeply that the greater portion of the line was displaced and put completely out of order. The result was horrifying. As soon as the trams stopped functioning, the removal of the contents of privies ceased. Complaints poured in from the ratepayers, but the Municipality could not redress their grievances on its own. Hiring skilled overseers and labourers to repair the tramlines under the supervision of the Municipal Engineer was too complex and daunting a task for the municipal commissioners. The local government therefore had to intervene to solve this sanitary problem. On the orders of the Divisional Commissioner, and under the advice of the Municipal Engineer, the hitherto unballasted lines were ballasted and wooden sleepers were substituted for the iron ones. The trams were at last able to start clearing away the accumulated filth of the city.[115] Both the money and the supervision had come from the government, but the Municipality still was not happy with the arrangement, regarding the tramway as a 'white elephant'. It was prohibitively expensive to carry night soil to the trenching ground by railway trucks; nearly thirty per cent of the total income from the latrine tax was spent every year on the upkeep of this tramway.[116] It cost the Municipality about Rs 24,000 annually, with an additional Rs 6,080 for the maintenance

of the trenching ground - making a total of Rs 30,080. An alternative scheme for sanitary sewerage was prepared by the Public Works Department, in collaboration with Dacca's Municipal Engineer, which was more efficient and less expensive to run, the annual recurring cost being no more than Rs 25,000.[117] The cost of constructing such a system, however, was way beyond the means of any municipality in India, but as this money was supposed to come from the provincial government as a grant, Dacca Municipality was concerned only with the maintenance of the sewerage.

It was not difficult to convince people of the advantages of an underground sanitary sewerage system; the problem was to obtain money for it. Since the majority of the people had no significant interest in sanitary arrangements of any kind, there was no possibility of raising funds for the removal of the city's night soil from public donations. The Nawabs of Dacca were ready to give the leadership to launch discussions and open negotiations with government, but the spirit which had inspired them to donate waterworks and electric lighting to the city with such spectacular generosity was missing when it came to a sewerage system. The most obvious reason for this was the financial condition of the Nawab of Dacca. Nawab Sir Salimullah had to raise a loan of Rs 16¼ lakhs from the government between 1907 and 1908[118] in order to maintain his position as a dedicated benefactor of the Muslim community in general and the Muslims of East Bengal in particular.[119] The sanitary project was thus entirely dependent on the good offices of government. Its realization was, predictably, slow.[120]

Before the sanitary sewerage scheme was executed, the conservancy of the city remained in the unsatisfactory condition described in the District Gazetteer of 1912:

> There are still five thousand public latrines which cannot be approached and which must therefore of

> necessity be left uncleared from year to year, a mass of festering ordure in the midst of a congested population. The principal streets are swept, but there is no system of drainage in the city, and in the by-lanes there is often an offensive stench from the accumulation of sewage and decaying garbage not only in the lane itself but in the adjacent premises.
>
> The streets and lanes are very narrow, and are in consequence both dark and stuffy. One quarter, indeed, the Sankhari Bazar is quite phenomenal. The houses are extraordinarily narrow, but run back for an enormous distance forming a curious warren of tiny rooms and passages into which neither light nor air can enter. Even the conditions of the bazars in which food is exposed for sale are most insanitary. [121]

Until 1920, the only major drainage was provided by the Dolai Khal and its branches, running through the heart of the city and emptying its filth into the Buriganga. All drains were above ground, and most were kacha (dug in the earth, as opposed to pakka drains made of brick and concrete) and difficult to clean. The majority of pakka drains were either badly built or in a state of disrepair - quite incapable of removing the sullage water which accumulated in them. In the dry season these drains formed stagnant pools which were breeding grounds for flies and mosquitoes. In the rainy season the foul water overflowed into the adjacent areas, affecting the neighbouring houses and presenting a hazard to unwary road users; the rash drivers of swift tikka garis (horse carriages) and the dozing conductors of heavily laden bullock carts often trapped the wheels of their vehicles in open sewers which lay hidden beneath streets brimming with dirty floodwater. Around the Mughal part of Dacca, early in the morning, it is still common to see drunken methors desperately whipping their bullocks, goading them to heave the heavy and stinking night soil carts up out of the flooded drains. Many of the town drains had no access for clearance, houses being constructed on either side of them, leaving hardly any space. In many cases, projections and covers placed over street drains by shopkeepers impeded clearance. The municipal commissioners felt this was objectionable and

should not be encouraged. But there was little they could do in the face of deep-rooted social habits and indeed similar practices still persist in Dacca. A chronic shortage of sweepers posed an additional problem; in 1919 there were only 46 sweepers to clear 29 miles of pakka drains and seven coolies to clear nine miles of kacha drains. [122]

There were innumerable private privies in the town, generally belonging to the poor people. The Municipality claimed to have 'made efficient' about a quarter of the privies in 1919 - but it admitted in its annual reports that this was quite insignificant in comparison with the number of foul privies remaining in the town. [123]

Increasing congestion worsened the sanitary condition of the city. There were no effective bye-laws to control building, and landowners were inclined to build houses on the whole space available, with total disregard to their surroundings and an utter indifference to the health of the inmates of their own and the neighbouring houses. [124] The Municipality regretted that lack of power and funds prevented it from reducing congestion and improving the city's sanitation. But it laid the blame mainly on the people, whose habits and customs were described by the chairman as 'perverse'. [125]

These habits and customs were by no means unique to Dacca. Many people lived in subhuman conditions in crowded English cities, until improvements began to be made in the second half of the nineteenth century. Like the old and congested areas of Dacca, many parts of London and other large British cities were characterized by:

> lack of sewers and drains, the existence of open stagnant ditches filled with decomposing animal and vegetable matter, unemptied cesspools and privies, accumulations of decaying refuse, inadequate ventilation in narrow courts and alleys, and the situation and condition of slaughterhouses and public burial grounds in densely populated districts. [126]

The evils of these unsalubrious conditions were magnified by the 'dirtiness of person and intemperance' of the

people living there. In Francis Sheppard's opinion these were largely lower class habits arising out of poverty and ignorance.[127] In India, too, such conditions prevailed, often reinforced by apathy. Merchants are found in Ahmedabad living in pols, clusters of houses built like beehives into which fresh air and sun could gain no entrance. In Allahabad and in Benares also, as in other Indian cities, the social and sanitary attitudes were widely shared by the rich and the poor.[128]

The construction of underground sewerage systems seemed to the commissioners to provide the only adequate and modern solution to the sanitary problems of the towns. As there was an accute shortage of methors in Bengal, it indeed seemed more wise to push on with sewerage schemes. and the installation of septic tanks than to depend too much on the human factor. Dacca was a pioneer among Bengal municipalities with regard to the remodelling of the conservancy system on modern lines.[129] Dacca Municipality was well aware of the urgency of the matter and made a number of representations to government under the inspiration of its chairman, Nawab Khwaja Yousuff Jan. At last, during the year 1919 - 1920, as the city prepared for the opening of the University, the Municipality received the first installment of a generous grant from government, amounting to Rs 300,000, for the building of the city's first underground drainage system. The second instalment, of Rs 240,741, came in 1920 - 1921, The cost of the original scheme was estimated at Rs 1,008,000. Work started in 1919, and it was hoped that it would be completed within three years. The estimate was subsequently revised by government and fixed at Rs 1,593,200 to accomodate an extension to Wari and Fulbaria - regularly planned middle-class residential areas. This was designed to give the inland portion of the town an arterial sewer and a fairly complete system of sewers in Wari, together with an extension of the main sewer along the Railway Staff Quarter Road. It was also intended to take up the sewage from the University area, for which a separate sewerage scheme was already under construction.[130]

The areas covered were nearly all well planned and either official or middle class in character. But between the area served by the initial scheme and the new extension, lay South Maisundi, Narandia and Dayaganj. This portion of the city was excluded from the sewerage system, although the main trunk sewer actually passed through it.[131] As these were congested and depressed quarters, the Municipality's deliberate neglect of them stands in marked contrast with the concern it showed towards the prosperous localities mentioned above which were provided with underground drains. Technical and legal problems might have hindered the installation of underground sewers in congested and unplanned areas like Bangla Bazar, Tanti Bazar or Narandia. However, that did not justify the provision of modern sanitation, almost exclusively to the wealthy few, at tremendous public expense, for a less costly solution had already been suggested by Professor Geddes in 1917. He questioned the validity of a prohibitively expensive underground sewerage system which could only benefit a tenth of the population and would take a decade to complete. Instead, he suggested a combination of old and new methods to solve Dacca's 'Augean problem of the filth'. The city already had 3,208 latrines along the khals (canals) and he saw no reason why the number of these familiar and traditional - also simple and cheap-devices should not be greatly increased. For removing the filth, he proposed a method which would be modern but at the same time far less expensive than underground sewerage or the ineffective railway system which he condemned as a ruinously costly defeat of sanitary engineering. Geddes suggested that ferro-concrete barges should be introduced to remove night soil from the khal privies. Such barges, which were being brought into use in Lombardy, could be cheaply and easily built. He enthusiastically described the merits of this system:

> The barge would be inoffensive, since covered over by a light but impermeable deck, and filled and emptied by a hand or motor pump. The attachment of a light motor to the barge is again an easy and inexpensive matter, and the whole can be worked by

> two men - the mechanic and the steersman at the stern, and the mehter at the prow. The latter with a flexible hose-pipe with wide nozzle, can reach many of the privies, and more by a step or two on shore; and the pump will do the rest, with great liberation from filthy toil to the man. When the barge has absorbed its train-load or more, it can make for its depot where it can be discharged by pumping again. [132]

The methors collecting night soil from nearby places could 'also go down the existing lanes to the Khals and discharge their burden into the barge'. Dacca, however, did not give Professor Geddes' scheme a trial and went ahead with the underground sewerage project. His proposal might have been accepted if the government had not been planning underground sewerage for Dacca University at this time, and consequently receptive to the idea of developing a system for the whole city. The Municipality did not lose the opportunity to obtain the most sophisticated and modern system the government could buy for them but, as Geddes had predicted, the project proved vastly expensive and slow to execute. It was never able to provide more than a partial solution, limited to a few wealthy areas, to Dacca's daunting sanitary problem. [133]

The conservancy tramline was done away with in 1922 and the practice of dumping night soil in the centre of the city was resumed. [134] It became customary for the Municipality to spend a substantial sum on conservancy and drainage annually, but ten years after the introduction of a sanitary sewerage system, in 1931, the city still had only thirteen public latrines for 138,518 people. Ten of them were connected with the sewers. The Municipality blamed the shortage of funds. Since government had donated only Rs 25 lakhs so far, only about two-thirds of the town could be sewered and so the previous system of removing night soil by bullock cart had to be maintained in some quarters. Far from being reduced after the introduction of the sewerage scheme, as had been anticipated, the recurring expenditure for night soil removal was therefore higher in

total. There was, however, an increasing demand for sewer connections from private house owners. Theoretically at least more such connections meant that fewer methors were needed to clear privies, which would help to solve the problem of finding more methors, the recruitment of whom had always been difficult. In practice, however, cleaning even the private sanitary privies could not be done by domestic servants, as the job was traditionally associated with the methors - a socially degraded class. The methors, therefore, remained much in demand. Nevertheless, the more houses were connected to sewers, the greater the sanitary improvement of the city. However, the construction of the underground sewerage system was still incomplete. Dacca Municipality always depended on grants and donations for all its major projects: but private donations were not forthcoming, while the government grant was insufficient. The Municipality had to revert to its usual custom of hoping and praying that government would kindly sanction further funds for the sewerage scheme. [136]

The number of 'serviceable' privies [137] in the city increased by nearly fifty per cent between 1921 and 1931, from 9,969 to 14,687. This achievement was marred by the fact that there was no proportionate increase in the number of methors employed to look after them. Their number, 188 in 1921, had become 232 by 1931 - an increase of only twenty-five per cent. That is to say, a methor who was supposed to clean fifty-three privies daily in 1921 was expected to attend to sixty-eight in 1931. And he was not helped by any improvements in his working conditions. The system of emptying privies by hand had not changed, the equipment remained the same, while the time allowed for methors to do their work had not been extended. On top of this, since the tramline had been closed in 1922, they had the additional duty of transporting the night soil by bullock cart to the dumping depots in Ramna and Miranjalla. It put an excessive burden of work on the methors, whose efficiency understandably declined. It seems that the dis-

proportionate increase in the number of serviceable privies and the continued existence of 3,000 'unserviceable' latrines (which methors could not clear because they were inaccessible) in 1931 posed too big a problem for the Municipality to cope with.[138]

The Sanitary Inspection Report on Dacca Municipality in 1937 was, like the previous ones, an exposure of the inadequacy of the civic body with regard to the city's sanitation. Nevertheless, the number of unserviceable latrines had been reduced to 2,000 and the number of private serviceable ones had risen to 15,844. Bringing the number of unserviceable privies substantially down was no mean achievement considering the ever growing population of the city. However, serviceability in itself was not a complete solution. All of these serviceable latrines had to be attended by methors, 254 of whom were now employed in the city. The ratio of 62 latrines per methor was still too high to ensure daily clearance; the Assistant Director of Public Health believed there should not be more than fifty latrines per methor. There were at this time twenty-four public latrines, with 123 seats; nineteen were connected with sewers. The large number of unserviceable latrines which still survived in the city posed a constant danger to public health, especially as they were mainly located in congested areas. The Assistant Director of Public Health declared that:

> No pen can describe the existing horrible state near such an unserviceable privy. There is one such area in Kazi Hamid Lane, although this road has sewer underneath. The owners of such houses must be compelled to erect privies connected with sewers. On looking at the place I at once remarked that if cholera does not break out in such places I do not know where it should and on enquiry it came out that there were several cases of cholera in that quarter recently.[139]

Even serviceable privies could pose a danger to health, for many had structural defects which made proper cleansing impracticable and provided excellent facilities for the

flies and other insects which helped to spread such diseases as cholera, typhoid and dysentery. In addition, seepage from the privies polluted the soil, the air and the water of the many shallow wells scattered over the city. The Municipality appreciated that these privies should be improved, but its good intentions were thwarted by the householders themselves. Ignorant of the dangers of insanitary living, they objected to spending money on the improvement of privies, and, besides, believed repair-work would constitute an unwarranted intrusion on their women's purdah. Consequently, progress was slow and painful. [140]

The Municipality also faced the problem of keeping the dumping depots clean. As most of them were located away from the river or the canals and no reservoir was in their vicinity, they did not receive an adequate supply of water, the pressure in the street mains being 'inordinately low'. Unable to draw water from the street hydrants through hose pipes for washing down filth carts and barrels, the sweepers and methors had to resort to the more laborious task of pumping it by hand. The amount of effort put into the job, therefore, depended entirely on the enthusiasm and conscientiousness of the cleaners; not surprisingly, the standard of cleanliness in the depots was extremely low. [141]

A better sewerage system would have eased all these problems. Although the total length of underground sewers had been extended to twenty-one miles by 1940, there was still an urgent need to have more drains all over the city. As underground sewers were extremely expensive, the Municipality decided to construct a number of surface drains instead. A scheme was prepared during 1939 - 1940 at an estimated cost of Rs 15,000 and the major part of the project was executed before the year was out. Surface drains, however, were not an adequate response to the challenge. The Municipality believed that the existing sewerage system had to be enlarged as soon as possible. A scheme was pre-

pared in 1941, for an extension commencing from the new Eden Girls' College at Paltan to meet the municipal sewers at Bama Charan Chakravarty Road after crossing the railway line at the Nawabpur crossing. The plan, unfortunately, could not materialize before the Partition of India in 1947, The Municipality explained in its annual report:

> as the desirable amount of contribution towards the scheme was not forth-coming from the Government and other benefiting parties, this important scheme which would have ultimately benefited the entire railway colony, the new Government House, the North Nawabpur and Captain Bazar areas of the town all of which were hitherto unsewered fell through. 142

The maintenance of the sewers, dumping depots, public latrines and sewerage pumping stations became more difficult from the middle of March 1941, due to the outbreak of communal riots in the city. The abnormal situation also made the collection of taxes impossible, with the result that the already inadequate municipal services became all the more slow and inefficient. [143]

The above discussions have established both the failings of the Municipality and its achievements in the field of conservancy and drainage. The Municipality always claimed to have put the greatest emphasis on conservancy and its boast appears to be justified as the highest expenditure was usually devoted to this item. The income for these services, though, fell short of demand throughout the period under review. The deficiencies were made good out of general funds at the cost of a reduction in the amount available for other vital matters like education, and medical facilities. [144]

Protests from the people against the Municipality's inefficiency in providing the services were biting but sporadic. In 1923, soon after the beginning of the period under review, the Rate Payers' Association of the city complained bitterly that the inadequacy of Dacca's municipal services was a reflection of the municipal board's incompetent management of civic affairs.[145] The press in 1923 and

1926 blamed the negligent sweepers as well as the inefficient commissioners for making the people suffer foul drains and ghastly latrines which Abuzoha Nur Ahmad, a contemporary college student of Dacca, recorded as far worse than those in Chittagong of the same period. [146] The government, however, pointed its finger at the lack of public spirit among the ratepayers. The Bengal Administration Reports frequently remarked that the latter:

> would rather see the funds for general well-being curtailed than a rate levied for conservancy that meets its full cost; and the Municipal boards too often follow the line of least resistance with this demoralising result. (147)

Although the Municipality took no radical action to change the situation, it did record its serious anxiety over these services throughout the forties. Finance was the weakest point in the conservancy administration, [148] as it was in the other municipal departments. Besides, the sweepers [149] who actually kept the municipal services going posed a special problem which deserves separate consideration.

The Sweepers

The cleaning of privies, drains and streets was monopolized by a section of untouchable Hindus who were known locally as methors or dhangars. They were not natives of Dacca, for the local people were unwilling to take up jobs which were socially degrading. The methors therefore had to be imported, mainly from Madras and the North Western Provinces, but their recruitment was not easy.[150] Dacca Municipality did not generally offer salaries of more than Rs 7 per month to the road sweepers and Rs 15 to the privy sweepers or methors. Since this was not enough to attract a large body of people from a distance the number of methors employed was very small, falling far short of the city's needs.[151] In 1921, at the beginning of the period under review, there were 188 privy methors to service a population of 117,900, giving a ratio of one methor per 627 people approximately.[152] A decade later, in 1931, the proportion of privy methors to population had become 1:597. By 1941, the situation had worsened and the proportion was 1:753. Thus, although about two thirds of the city had been sewered by that time, the pressure on the methors, far from being reduced, actually increased as a result of the disproportionate growth of Dacca's population.[153]

The methors were expected to do an amount of work that was not physically possible for them. Each was allotted two or more jobs in order to prevent the conservancy service from collapsing. This unhappy arrangement did not disturb the municipal commissioners. On the contrary, they congratulated themselves on the standard of efficiency maintained in conservancy work.[154]

The methors usually started with something below a living wage and got on to what they considered a reasonable drinking and gambling wage. A Sanitary Inspection Report on Dacca Municipality revealed how important drink-

ing was to these people. They believed drinking was necessary in their work, which was otherwise intolerable, and they needed it to help them forget the cheerless, damp and leaky huts they lived in. They also justified their drinking on another ground, believing that, by toasting their deceased friends and relations, they could keep their departed souls happy.[155] It is interesting that the Sanitary Inspector did not think the methors had a right to complain of their dreary and depressing residences. Rather than their living conditions, he put more stress on their personal habits, which he believed adversely affected the services of the Municipality. Their drunkenness, gambling, quarrels and frequent Panchayat meetings made it impossible to keep up a systematic routine of night work. They did not hesitate to shirk their duties whenever it suited their fancy and so the work schedule broke down.[156]

Night work for the methors was unique to Dacca among all the municipalities of Bengal. Nor was there any muster-call in Dacca as there was in Calcutta, so every sweeper had to be roused individually from his sleep and fetched from his hut to be sent down to work. Night work was very unpopular among the sweepers who freely admitted that they neglected their duty sometimes:

> because of the number of accidents they sustain in negotiating the ghost-ridden passages at night, either slushy or obstructed by broken glass, nails or crockery. And then the huge reservoirs which could not be cleaned at a time.[157]

Night duties had other disadvantages as well. The methors enjoyed a poor reputation for honesty and as proper supervision was difficult when they worked in the dark, they could not be prevented from emptying their buckets of ordure into the drains and tanks at times.[158]

The majority of methors liked to do three or four jobs at once. This was primarily due to the scarcity of sweepers, but was also because of the wishes of the existing crews. The District Magistrate of Nadia explained in 1925 - 1926

that if, with great difficulty, new methors could be recruited 'there would be a strike everywhere, unless wages were raised 50 per cent all round. The men are only content because they get double-pay by doubling jobs'.[159]

Although the District Magistrate called this attitude their 'insubordination',[160] it also reflected financial pragmatism on the part of the sweepers. It was the only way to cope with the high cost of living. The average income of a sweeper family was about thirty to forty rupees per month. This was insufficient to sustain the average family of five or six people. They did not, therefore, welcome new recruits who would reduce the number of jobs available and upset their pay arrangements. However, they made themselves more miserable than necessary because their addiction to drinking and gambling prevented them from utilizing all their earnings on necessities. Consequently, they had to borrow money from moneylenders at high rates of interest which they tried to repay by taking advances from the Municipality. They could never pay off their debts completely, so when the 'strangle-hold' of their creditors became intolerable, they had recourse to absconding. This was a very popular course of action with them, and they frequently adopted it to solve various other problems, such as escaping from the decrees of their Panchayat or finding better paid jobs elsewhere. They used to disappear also when they felt homesick or grew tired of their work.[161]

This state of affairs was unfair both on the ratepayers and on those poorly-paid methors who did not abscond but who lacked the stamina to sustain the stress of working in depressing, not to say revolting, surroundings.[162] Only higher wages and better working conditions could have inspired them to carry on with their heavy load of work. No better facilities were given to them, however, until they started to resort to strike action from time to time. This method proved so successful that the Municipality was forced to grant some benefits and amenities to the methors, even though they were not its permanent employees. They

were given maternity and sickness allowances, as well as medical aid; gratuities were awarded to those who were old and became incapacitated; three primary schools were established to educate sweeper boys free of cost.[163]

Apart from the municipal help, an important individual effort was also made to improve the conditions of the methors. This came from Dr. Pratap Chandra Sen, the Health Officer of the Municipality. He started a co-operative bank for the sweepers with a heavy debt of Rs 17,000 on his personal security. The bank opened in 1928 and within two years it had secured more than Rs 5,000 as working capital, all contributed by the sweepers themselves.[164]

At this time, the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Delhi, along with other places under Gandhi's influence, was regularly appealing to the government to ameliorate the conditions of sweepers all over India. In Bengal, the government proposed that municipalities should treat sweepers as permanent employees. Many municipalities rejected the proposal on financial grounds. Dacca Municipality, however, came up with the excuse of the irresponsible behaviour of the methors. The chairman, Birendranath Majumdar, argued that the methors already enjoyed a number of facilities which were usually given to permanent employees. They were eligible for pension after twenty years' service, they received fifteen days paid leave each year, and they earned a bonus for satisfactory service at the end of each year, in lieu of a provident fund. The chairman added that the sweepers were also given appropriate housing facilities and the use of a co-operative bank. All this had, according to the chairman, been done for them as a favour, and he gave the impression that it was more than they really deserved. The Municipality was prepared to do more for them, but only on condition that the methors changed their attitude towards their duties. The chairman explained:

> It is open to the sweepers to enjoy the full benefits of permanent employment by developing steady and sober habits. Until their general

> outlook on their responsibilities to the community changes and is found to be fair and reasonable, the superimposition of the implications of the label of a permanent servant will benefit neither themselves nor their employers - the general body of rate-payers. 165

As far as government and the Municipality were concerned, the question of treating sweepers as permanent employees ended there. The Dacca methors, however, did not give up their battle with the Municipality for the better facilities which they believed they deserved. For nearly two decades, from 1923 to 1942, their spokesman was Dr. P.C. Sen, the Health Officer of the Municipality, Soon after his successor, Dr. A.N. Khan, took up the post in 1942, the methors realized that they were now completely on their own.[166] They therefore tried to become more united than ever and when they, like many others, were badly hit by the rise in prices of essential goods caused by the war, they started negotiating with the municipal authority through their Union. They had four main demands. They wanted their Dearness Allowance to be raised from Rs. 8 to Rs. 30 per month; they asked for their barracks to be repaired and for more medical facilities to be given to them; and they asked for a regular supply of rice, pulses, mustard oil, salt, sugar, flour and standard cloth at controlled rates. [167]

The Health Officer's note on these demands was not favourable to the interests of the methors. He explained that wage rates in Dacca were no lower than in any of the four other important municipalities of Bengal, one of which was under direct government control. A comparative list of wages in some of the municipalities is given below: [168]

Municipality	Monthly wages (Rupees)	Daily working hours	Monthly wages (Rupees)	Daily working hours
	Nightsoil workers		Road sweepers	
Calcutta	13	5	13	6½
Howrah	11/8	4	11/8	4
Dacca	11	4	7	3½
Chittagong	12	8	12	6
	(males)		(males)	
	8		8	
	(females)		(females)	
Mymensingh	11	4 - 5	8	2½ - 3

Municipality	Drain coolies		Dearness Allowance (Rupees)
Calcutta	15	6	8
Howrah	11/8	4	3
Dacca	7	3	8
Chittagong	12	6	4
	(males)		(males)
	8		2
	(females)		(females)
Mymensingh	8	2½ - 3	5/8

The above statistics show the wages of sweepers in Dacca were lower than in Calcutta and Howrah.. The Health Officer, however, defended them on the ground that most of the workers in Calcutta and Howrah were men, whereas they were mostly women in Dacca. Presumably, women did not work as well as men. Besides, they worked for shorter hours too. Thus the Health Officer concluded that the wages paid by the Municipality were very reasonable. Moreover, Dacca furnished unique opportunities for willing and able-bodied men to do double, triple and sometimes quadruple jobs under the Municipality or other authorities. As to increasing their salaries, the Municipality could not possibly do anything. Most municipal sweepers were part-time

workers. Their Union's demand for a full living wage for part-time work did not strike the Health Officer as being reasonable. He and the other municipal commissioners agreed that men who were willing and able to do a day's work could have wages equivalent to that put forward by the Sweepers' Union as a living wage. The Municipality also said it was willing to consider every individual case of hardship sympathetically. But at the same time the commissioners expressed their objections to the 'indiscriminate' use of strikes by the sweepers as a weapon against the municipal authority. Although the strike was a fairly common weapon among the methors of many municipalities in Bengal, and of Dacca Municipality since the nineteenth century,[169] the chairman regarded it as a technique peculiar to Dacca only. In his view:

> The additional allowance demanded on pain of paralysing the conservancy arrangements of the city completely, does not appear to have any precedent or parallel in any Municipality. [170]

The Dacca Municipality was of the opinion that, in the forties, sweepers were much better off in Dacca than elsewhere. Their barracks in the city were visited by numerous distinguished people, including two District Magistrates, a Minister-in-Charge of the Local Self Government Department and N.R. Sarker, ex-Mayor of Calcutta and Commerce Member of the Government of India. All considered the barracks to be a great improvement on similar premises in other municipalities.[171] The insanitary conditions in the barracks were blamed by the Health Officer on the sweepers themselves:

> War may have prevented the Municipality from carrying out repairs, but the lack of repairs is not responsible for converting the quarters to places fit for pigs.... Every one in the world has to put up with inconveniences, but to magnify each inconvenience into a bludgeon for breaking the heads of the employers may not prove the test of wisdom. [172]

However much the strikers might be condemned by the Health Officer, the methors, unable to negotiate with the

commissioners on equal terms, thought it was the only way they could put pressure on the Municipality. The sweepers were clearly unhappy with their wages, but the Municipality found it difficult to increase the budget. The real problem, therefore, seems to have been the shortage of funds. The conservancy budget of 1944 - 1945 had a deficit of Rs 183,386, even after the receipt of a government subvention of Rs 29,880. To accede to the Union's demand, the Municipality would have had to find Rs 270,000 more. This was not possible without massive government aid. [173]

In 1945, there were three methor strikes in succession and a threatened strike by the water-works staff. These required the intervention of the Municipality's chairman, vice-chairman and Engineer, as well as the District Magistrate and Inspector of Police, before the workers could be persuaded to resume their work with a promise that their grievances would be redressed in the future. The chairman blamed Communists for instigating the illiterate methors to go on strike. Some commissioners suggested that a sub-committee should be formed, consisting of the chairman, the vice-chairman and the Additional Superintendent of Police, to find the causes of the trouble and propose remedies. This, however, did not materialize in the end. The Municipality also tried to recruit poor local Muslims as methors as a last resort to save the situation. During the famine of 1943, a few starving Muslims from the destitute camps did come forward, but they made no significant difference to the problem. [174]

It is clear from the above account that the conservancy service in Dacca failed to reach a satisfactory standard. The shortage of funds was by far the greatest problem, but the structural defects of a large number of privately owned privies also impeded the sanitary improvement of the city. From time to time the Municipality sent notices to householders in an attempt to force them to improve their privies, [175] but, as the chairman of the Municipality ex-

plained, these efforts:

> were in a great measure neutralized by the hopeless poverty of a large section of the property owners, or incomprehensible apathy of the richer rate-payers. [176]

The Municipality never tried to use coercive measures on a large scale because it was felt that they were 'not likely to receive public support'.[177]

In addition, the undependable and whimsical behaviour of the methors remained a constant source of worry to the Municipality, obstructing the regularity of the conservancy service. Their attitude seems largely to have been dictated by their appalling working conditions, their poverty and their consequent frustration. Moreover, they lacked a sense of loyalty to the community. This was inevitable, given the conditions in which they lived. Coming from outside Bengal, they remained isolated in their own little colonies on the banks of the stagnant Dolai Khal and elsewhere, shunned by the local people who regarded them as outcastes. Indeed, sweepers were treated with scant consideration throughout India, except by Gandhi and his followers. They were not allowed to draw water from the same well or water hydrant as high caste Hindus, nor could they attend the same temple, or, quite often, the same school. Their touch, or even their shadow, could pollute an orthodox Brahmin. They were, as one observer commented, 'the Inferiority Complex personified'. [178] Under the circumstances, one could hardly expect them to develop a feeling of belonging to the city or its environment. It was equally natural that any hope held out to them of bettering their social and economic conditions would have an extremely strong appeal for them.

Other Aspects of Public Health

Since Mughal times, Dacca had enjoyed the reputation of being one of the healthiest districts of Bengal. Its healthy climate was said to have been one of the major factors leading Islam Khan to choose it as the capital of the Bengal Subah. This view was echoed in the 1912 District Gazetteer,[179] while the people of Dacca city seemed to the author of the 1921 Census 'to be of a good healthy stock.'[180] As confirmation it might be noted that from 1881, there was a continuous surplus of recorded births over recorded deaths. The table below gives the figures in the city for two decades:[181]

Year	Births	Deaths	Increase in number of births over the number of births
1921	3,571	3,484	87
1931	3,820	3,136	684
1941	5,425	3,309	116

As a large number of people, even today, do not inform the Municipality of the incidents of birth or death occurring in their families, undoubtedly a good many occurrences escaped registration every year. These figures, therefore, should be handled with caution. The trend they illustrate, for recorded births to exceed recorded deaths, was generally regarded, however, as proof that public health was on the whole good. As the District Gazetteer remarked:

> The salubrity of the district is generally ascribed by its inhabitants to the beneficial action of the great rivers. The floods that sweep over the country during the rains cleanse the lowlands of all impurities and leave them clean and sweet and the cool breezes blowing over these vast stretches of water fortify the constitution against disease. (182)

The Municipality, for its part, was credited with further improving the city's public health through a series of vigorous measures.[183] In order to assess the true state of the people's health, one has to look at the diseases

which afflicted them and the prevalence of malnutrition and other debilitating factors which sapped their vitality, and also to consider the extent to which the Municipality could claim to have acted as saviour of the citizens.

'Dacca is rather liable to cholera' [184]

For a long time, cholera was the major killer in the city, as in many other parts of India. It caused much panic in nineteenth century England too, ultimately providing the stimulus for great sanitary improvements. The cause and ways of transmission of this deadly disease have been described by Francis Sheppard as follows:

> Cholera is transmitted by swallowing the cholera vibrio, a tiny comma-shaped bacillus. The vibrio is held in the victim's intestine, and the disease spreads by entering the intestine of another person. This occurs in two ways - by direct contact, or by contamination of the water supply. In filthy overcrowded conditions of living there are frequent physical contacts with human excrement, and flies, too, can carry the bacillus from infected faeces to food. In cases of direct contact the disease attacked individual families or houses. But the cholera vibrio can also live for up to about fourteen days in water, and when it became water-borne it attacked whole areas with terrible violence before dying away almost as suddenly as it had come... .
>
> It attacked with appalling suddenness, its victims sometimes dying within a couple of hours of its first onset. More usually the disease lasted for several days; violent stomach pains, vomiting and diarrhoea were followed by a total collapse in which the body became cold, the pulse almost imperceptible and the skin wizened and blue. There was no effective treatment, and one in every two cases proved fatal. 185

In Dacca, cholera used to begin in March and last through the dry, hot months of summer till May. During this period, water was scarce and as people indiscriminately used water, from wells, ditches and canals, which was stagnant and often contaminated, the disease used to spread rapidly; at the same time, the population of flies, which could carry cholera germs all over the city, was multiplying. The onset of rains in mid-June killed and washed away

large number of flies and, to some extent, cleansed the pools of stagnant water, and so the number of cholera cases fell, reaching a minimum during the wet monsoon months from July to September. After the cessation of rain in October, a slight increase in the number of cholera cases used to take place during the autumn and winter till March, thus completing the annual cycle. There were endemic cases in the town throughout the year, from which epidemic diffusion took place in local areas. [186]

'The cholera is the best of all sanitary reformers, it overlooks no mistake and pardons no oversight': [187] this comment of The Times was largely true for Great Britain, where the ravages of cholera provoked massive sanitary reforms, but in India it was a long time before similar reforms could become effective. Cholera, as the most dramatic and 'dreaded of scourges', [188] attracted a great deal of concerned attention, while the relationship between the disease, filth and impure water was also clear to many people. And yet only a few large cities constructed sewers and waterworks in India before the turn of the century. [189] Dacca was one of them. Prior to 1877, when the city was first supplied with filtered water, cholera claimed many lives almost every year, and it continued to kill no less than 300 people annually until 1908, when the waterworks were extended to increase the supply of filtered water which hitherto had been available for only a third of the population. After the completion of the project in March 1910, only 141 deaths were recorded as being caused by cholera. [190] As the filtered water was not adequately distributed all over the city, the disease still did not disappear altogether. Outbreaks were quite common, and at times very severe. Apart from the inadequacy of drinking water, the social habits of the people were also responsible for spreading the disease. Sometimes the death rate from cholera among the various communities differed dramatically, indicating the different standards of personal hygiene observed by them. A cholera epidemic in 1919 caused 112 deaths

among the Hindus and forty-eight among the Muslims. There was no death from cholera among the Europeans.[191]

There were epidemics of cholera also in 1921, 1922, 1923 and 1926, but a visitation in 1927 - 1928 was unusually severe, causing 237 deaths. Four European sisters in the convent also died in 1927, as a result of drinking contaminated milk.[192] The following table gives the distribution of cases by wards in 1926 and 1928:[193]

Year	Wards							Hospital & Civil Station	Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII		
1926	26	9	12	17	7	5	9	13	98
1928	52	23	43	46	8	10	26	29	237

The chairman interpreted these figures 'as the writing on the wall' which pointed to the urgency of sanitary improvements, especially in the following areas:[194]

> Ward I: Nurpur, Bahadurpur, Alamganj, Dhalkanagar, Distillery Road, Kagajitola, Banianagar, Rokanpur. Ward III: Dayaganj, Jaluapara, Bose's Bazar, Dakhin Maisundi, Banagram, Captain Bazar. Ward II: Tanti Bazar, Sankhaari Bazar, Uchab Poddar Lane, Prasanna Poddar Lane, Basabari, Jhulanbari, Zindabahar, Shahjadah Mea Lane, P.K. Das Lane. Ward IV: Siddir Bazar, Nazira Bazar, Bangshal, Nawab Katra. Ward VI: Rahmat Ganj, Hyderbaksh Lane, Gour Sundar Roy Lane, Khaje Dewan. Ward VII: Amligola, Enayet Ganj, Hossainuddin Khan Lane, Bhagalpur.

Cholera casualties in Dacca followed a nearly similar pattern in 1931, when the above-mentioned areas, as well as Ward VI, suffered more than the others. Wards IV, I and VI had an especially high casualty rate in 1931, while Ward V was virtually free from the disease; the total number of deaths in the city was recorded as 154.[195] The wardwise distribution of cholera fatalities in 1940 and 1941 was as follows:[196]

Year	Wards							Hospital & Civil Station	Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII		
1940	12	14	14	14	5	2	2	7	70
1941	4	4	11	2	0	1	3	4	29

Clearly, the outbreaks were gradually becoming less severe, but the wardwise distribution indicates that some of the insanitary areas were still badly affected by the disease. Although Ward III possessed, in Wari suburb, a clean and salubrious enclave, it also contained a number of insanitary areas like Dayaganj, Jaluanagar, Maisundi, Captain Bazar and Banagram. Cholera, therefore, readily broke out in those areas. On the other hand Ward V, despite being the most densely populated part of the city, had the least cholera deaths. Because of its nearness to the major cluster of government offices on the southern end of Nawabpur-Johnson Road, it had a good supply of filtered water, while its central location gave its residents a better chance of obtaining regular vaccinations. Perhaps Ahsan Manzil, the residence of the Nawabs, had a good influence on the people as well. The Municipality also must have taken these expensive commerical areas more seriously and scrupulously for vaccination than many other areas. As cholera is a waterborne disease, the frequency of the outbreaks indicates the inadequacy of the supply of filtered water in the city. Throughout the period under review, no death from cholera was recorded among the Europeans, except for the four convent sisters. Most Europeans lived in the Ramna suburb - away from the city centre. In addition, they were usually more aware of the necessity to boil their water than the locals.[197]

Dacca Municipality's Public Health Department was better staffed than many municipalities in Bengal. It had maintained a first grade Health Officer and three second class Sanitary Inspectors since before the beginning of our period. There was also the permanent staff of four male and one female vaccinators, and one sub-inspector for vaccination. In 1920 - 1921 one additional male and four more female vaccinators were employed for four months to help the permanent staff.[198] But this addition was only made when there was an outbreak, or the fear

of an outbreak, of cholera and smallpox in the city. When, for example, an epidemic of small pox and cholera broke out in 1941, the Municipality employed as many as 17 epidemic staff in Dacca. [199] The Public Health Department of Bengal regularly supplied the municipalities with educational leaflets for distribution at various offices, educational institutions, markets, mosques and temples. Free lectures and health exhibitions were also organized by the Department and made available to the municipalities and district boards in order to spread effective propoganda through the towns and villages. This propaganda campaign, making inoculation more acceptable to the masses, may have helped to reduce the severity of epidemics in the city. [209]

According to sanitary reports, Hindus were more open to attack from cholera than Muslims. It is customary for Hindus to bathe immediately after visiting the privy; this exposes them to infection if carriers and convalescents are among the other bathers, especially if they wash out their mouths at the same time. Cleaning kitchen utensils in polluted water is an equally common means of spreading disease. Inadequate water supply compelled people to use water from khals, rivers and wells for bathing and other household purposes, although they were contaminated by unserviceable privies, foul kacha cesspools and insanitary drains. In addition, unserviceable drains and privies built close to kitchens and dining rooms helped the flies to disseminate infections. [201] Sometimes people made matters worse by trying to keep cholera cases secret, for fear of being boycotted by their friends and relations, and so assisted the spread of the disease. In addition, there was little public enthusiasm for cholera inoculations; this was partly due to fatalism and partly because the cholera injection was particularly painful, while the in-

oculation of women by male vaccinators was disapproved of in most households.[202]

Dysentery and Diarrhoea

A good number of people also died from dysentery and diarrhoea in Dacca. These diseases attracted little public attention because they were less dramatic in their mode of onset and termination than cholera, and less spectacular with regard to visible suffering than smallpox. Nevertheless, they 'consistently caused a very large number of deaths in the city every year,'[203] and were eightfold more deadly in urban than rural areas as the chairman Khwaja Nazimuddin recorded in his report in 1926 - 1927.[204] The total number of recorded deaths from bowel disease in 1925 - 1926 was as high as 349 and was even higher in the following year. The insanitary areas were especially badly affected, as the following figures for 1926 - 1927 make clear:

Ward	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Rate of incidence per 1,000:	2.7	2.4	2.8	2.5	2.9	2.0	3.8

Total deaths 364.

According to the Municipality's report the same insanitary areas in all these Wards were affected as were prone to cholera.[205]

The Municipality was well aware of the causes of these diseases. As the Health Officer explained in one of his reports:

> excretal filth in minute quantities, finding its way into food and drink conveys infection. Obviously, therefore, the thousands of privies, drains and cesspools which permit soakage of excretal matter into wells or other water supplies, or are exposed to flies and insects, are the responsible sources of the diseases. (206)

The Municipality continued its health education programme without marked effect on public health. It found itself in an impasse, for coercion was politically impossible, while persuasion did not work. 'Coercive action as a mass measure is unthinkable', said a report, because it would antagonize the ratepayers against the municipal authority. On the other hand, issuing notices to householders to improve the sanitary condition of their premises was ineffective; out of 800 statutory notices issued in 1924 - 1925, only 270 cases of compliance were secured. The Municipality therefore found it more convenient to appeal to the good sense of the public and so shift the responsibility to the people. As one chairman declared: [207]

> unless the householders wake up to the importance of setting their houses in order, it may be impossible to stamp out the scourge from the city.

Unfortunately, there were no special hospital facilities for patients of dysentery and diarrhoea in Dacca and the Municipality recorded its anxiety over the fact that the death rate from these diseases was on the increase, as the following figures for 1929 - 1930 show: [208]

Ward:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Rate of incidence per 1,000	4.1	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.2	2.1	5.6

Total deaths 486.

The highest incidence was still in Ward VII. The increase in the death rate from bowel disease in all wards reflected the sanitary condition of the city. The Municipality admitted its responsibility in this sphere and was aware of its failure to make any significant improvement in the city's sanitation. This, however, should not imply that the civic body had done nothing to fight this enemy of public health. Since the beginning of our period it had been trying to educate Dacca's people about the causes and remedies of bowel diseases through occasional

lectures by medical officers at Northbrook Hall and student's halls on the University campus, often using magic lanterns to make their tasks effective and interesting. Health inspections of schools also began in Dacca in 1921 on the instructions of the Public Health Department of Bengal. [209] From 1927, a number of schools in the city, began to construct 'sanitary conveniences' with government aid. [210] These must have had some cumulative effect on public awareness of the causes of bowel diseases. The decreasing figures for the total numbers of deaths from 1930 - 1931 onwards indicate that the anxieties and efforts of the Municipality in this field were not entirely in vain. The following table illustrates the point: [211]

Year	Total number of deaths from diarrhoea and dysentery in Dacca city
1930-31	437
1934-35	233
1939-40	350
1940-41	320

The total death toll from diarrhoea and dysentery in 1940 - 1941 was recorded by the Municipality as being the lowest for the previous five years. But a significant number of people was still dying from these diseases every year. Among other factors, the eradication of bowel diseases depended also on the economic condition and personal hygiene of the people. In Dacca, as in other cities of India, the majority was poor and illiterate. The educational propaganda was confined to the upper strata of society. The increasing congestion in the old part of Dacca also contributed to the insanitary condition of many areas. The municipal commissioners of Dacca were convinced that a solution was beyond their power.[212] Their activities were governed by the note of despair which underlies the following remarks made by Khwaja Nazimuddin as early as 1925: [213]

> abolition of the sources of these infections can be secured by expenditure of money and sustained

> vigilance, by the Municipality and the rate payers combined, but both educational and economic conditions are unfavourable for this purpose.

This pessimism was natural in view of the fact that bringing universal education and prosperity to the people of Dacca was way beyond the Municipality's capacity. The civic body was not even successful in supplying adequate pure drinking water to the city - an essential pre-requisite in the fight against dysentery and diarrhoea. If pure water was scarce, so was pure food. During the period under review, when the literacy of the city was even lower than at present, awareness of the dangerous effect of adulterated food on public health must have been negligible among the profiteering business men, as was the vigilance of the people. The Municipality was not optimistic about the prospect of removing this 'curse' from the city. The commissioners' despair was reinforced by their inability to check the widespread adultration of food in the city's bazars which was revealed year after year in the Dacca Public Health laboratory's analyses of food samples.

Food adulteration

The adulteration of food, which was practised all over India, was an important cause of the various bowel diseases which sapped people's vitality throughout the year. In Bengal, a Food Adulteration Act was passed in 1919 in an attempt to control this menace to public health. The Act empowered the municipal commissioners to collect samples of food stuffs from the markets and give them to the government laboratory for testing. Adulterated food seized under this Act was to be destroyed by order of a Magistrate while the offenders - both manufacturers and retailers - faced a maximum fine of Rs 200 for a first offence (Rs 1,000 for subsequent offences), or three months in prison, or both. The fines

were to be credited to the municipal fund. [214]

It was left to individual municipalities to enforce the Act and maintain the quality of food sold within their jurisdiction. At the initiative of the Municipal Health Officer and the chairman, Khwaja Yousuff, the Act was extended to Dacca in 1921. [215] Samples of foodstuffs were regularly collected from the markets - five private and one municipal - by Sanitary Inspectors and analysed by the Public Health Laboratory in Dacca. The foodstuffs most commonly destroyed by the Municipality were fish, vegetables, meat, and ghee (clarified butter). Fish and vegetables were much in demand from all sections of society; as meat was eaten only by Muslims, it was not sold in such large quantities in Dacca. All, however, were easily perishable and so, without refrigerating facilities, they could not be preserved for long. Ghee was used by the wealthy sections of the communities, except the Europeans.

As the following table shows, the percentage of food samples betraying signs of adulteration increased steadily: [216]

Year	Percentage of samples found adulterated
1924-25	46%
1926-27	38%
1930-31	50%
1932-33	53%
1935-36	59%
1940-41	68%

Clearly, the evil was not under control at any time during the period under review. The Municipality tried to prosecute people as a deterrent, but the number of prosecutions always exceeded convictions, while fines were ridiculously low, ranging from Rs 5 to Rs 15. The prosecutions, initiated by the Health Officer, were always based on the findings of the government laboratory's analysts and could not be heard by magistrates with less than second

class powers. It is difficult to establish precisely what happened between the prosecutions and the verdicts but the low rate of convictions and the derisory fines appear to testify to the pervasive influence of the trading and manufacturing communities in Dacca.[217] Many second-class magistrates were, after all, alleged to be members of merchant families.[218] The pattern of convictions and punishments is clearly revealed in the following table:[219]

Year	No of cases prosecuted	No of convictions	Fines realized in Rupees and annas
1924-1925	111	87	739-12
1926-1927	135	75	791-13
1930-1931	114	62	688-00
1934-1935	338	298	1,713
1940-1941	328	259	1,753

The following table records an impressive amount of major items of foodstuffs destroyed in the city:[220]

Year	Names of items and amount destroyed in maunds					
	Fish	Vegetables	Meat	Ghee	Milk	Fruit
1925-1926	117.2	100.2	64.2	33.25	13.6	27.1
1930-1931	63.3	33.75	44.5	1.3	5.4	9.9
1940-1941	297.2	236.7	125.25	103.75	108.7	39.6

These evidently represented a fraction of the total

quantities of foodstuffs sold in the city.

Apart from the specified markets with fixed stalls, over which the Municipality could exercise some supervision, there were many small, impermanent bazars which sprang up at convenient places on Tuesdays and Saturdays. There were also unlicensed vendors and goalas (milkmen) over whom no law had any sway. The Municipality also had little control over the private slaughtering of animals. Although two municipal abattoirs in Kashaituli and Shahjahanpur were well kept, the illicit slaughter of bullocks, buffaloes, cows, sheep and goats, often under unhygienic conditions, was rampant in the city.[221] The poor quality of food in the market affected the health of all classes of people. A report on the health of the students in the four halls of residence of Dacca University in 1946 - 1947 is revealing:[222]

> The special feature of this session is an abnormal increase in the gastro-intestinal disorder and deficiency disease which is due to adulteration and inferior quality of food materials available in the market. Altogether 392 such cases were recorded, many of which required injections of vitamins and calcium. For general scarcity of food materials combined with the lack of vigilence on the part of the Municipality and the Public Health Department, the market is flooded with adulterated food materials affecting the health of the public.

The Food Adulteration Act, therefore, was not particularly effective in Dacca. The Dhaka Prokash launched an attack on the Municipality's shortcomings as early as 1926, complaining that the sentences imposed were so light as practically to frustrate the labour of prosecution.[223] The difficulty was that the Municipality was reluctant to incur the displeasure of influential tradesmen, who formed a substantial element of the electorate, 'by insisting on a high standard of purity in food stuffs'.[224] There was, moreover, a personal element: several of the commissioners were shop-owners and traders themselves.[225] It is also likely that the low-paid Sanitary Inspectors were vulnerable

to bribes offered by the stall keepers. Nevertheless, if Dacca's record left much to be desired, it could at least compare favourably with the other municipalities of Bengal. In Burdwan Division the Food Adulteration Act was reported to be 'more or less a dead letter'. In Khulna, Chittagong and in the Presidency Division it was employed half heartedly or not at all. Although there was no reason to suppose that food was any purer than in the rest of Bengal, nobody at all was prosecuted in Jalpaiguri and Malda municipalities in 1932-33, whereas Dacca prosecuted 86 persons in the same year. The Act was relatively more enthusiastically employed in Eastern Bengal than in the rest of the province.[226]

Food adulteration is in fact a complex problem which has defied a complete solution even in the technologically and economically advanced countries of the West. A high level of public education, combined with cooperation from food manufacturers, can go a long way to eradicating the health hazards of adulteration. However, pure food is, in any society, more expensive; and the poorer the general standard of living, the more people will be unable, even if perfectly willing, to avoid buying the cheapest, impure and even rotten food.

Smallpox

Smallpox was a dreaded disease, usually transmitted through personal contact with a victim. It was not so serious a cause of mortality in Dacca as cholera, dysentry and diarrhoea, but nevertheless it broke out occasionally in full fury, claiming a large number of lives. According to the death register of the Municipality, 466 people died of smallpox in Dacca in 1919.[227] The first case was reported in the last week of December 1918 - not surprisingly, it was in the overcrowded and insanitary methor colony at the Miranjalla conservancy depot. The Municipality claimed to have made the necessary attempts to segregate

patients as much as possible. But it had little success with preventative measures among the methors. On the one hand their superstitious beliefs against vaccination made them proof against persuasion, and on the other hand coercion could not be employed for fear of provoking a strike.[228] In January, some cases were reported from the Railway Staff quarter and Railway employees were vaccinated. The first death occurred in Bangshal, a congested area in Ward IV which was also recorded to be cholera prone.[229] A house-to-house vaccination drive launched by the Municipality was neither popular nor successful, people avoiding vaccination whenever possible. The chairman complained that they simply 'did not care to realise the gravity of the situation'. [230] A warning notice was circulated in the bazars and offices to make the public aware of the danger of an epidemic. Two more vaccinators were appointed to help the existing three; three disinfecting gangs were engaged to work under the sanitary inspectors, and much infected bedding and clothing was burnt. Schools and colleges were closed for a time. Yet the situation could not be saved. All the wards became involved, and as many as one-third of the total deaths in the town in 1918-19 were attributed to smallpox. The Municipality blamed the carelessness of the people; they were reluctant to be vaccinated in time, while patients were not properly segregated, their friends and relations not being prevented from visiting them. As a result, the disease spread rapidly all over the city.[231]

The number of smallpox deaths among Hindus was 253, much more than among Muslims, 193 of whom died. [232] It may have been a mere coincidence that Muslims were more willing to be vaccinated and revaccinated than Hindus. It may also be true that the Hindus, who believed smallpox was caused by the wrath of the goddess Śitla, had little or no faith in the vaccination.[233] They felt that an offering to the goddess was more effective.

The number of deaths was greater among females than

males. Women in general were - and still are - less protected than men. They were exposed to constant infection while nursing children, menfolk and each other. In addition, there was more negligence among them about vaccination. The unprotected women were greater in number among Muslims because of their strict purdah system. Muslim men, who might be prepared to be vaccinated themselves, strongly objected to their women being vaccinated by male vaccinators; most Hindu men had similar feelings. But it was clearly impossible for one female vaccinator to set about treating 35,000 adult women on her own.[234] To remedy this important deficiency in its social service programme, the Municipality in 1921 employed one male and four female vaccinators for two months in addition to the permanent staff of four male and one female vaccinators and a sub-inspector. A vigorous house-to-house vaccination drive was launched, despite people's unwillingness; it was, as usual, free of charge. The following figures show the result of this effort:

Primary vaccination in 1920 - 1921	-	3,038
Re-vaccination in 1920 - 1921	-	3,228
Total number of smallpox deaths in the year-		6

The municipal authority proudly claimed credit for this reduction in the number of deaths from smallpox; the previous year during 1919 - 1920, 313 people had died. It did not, however, admit any responsibility for the earlier high figure, laying the major part of the blame on the carelessness of the inhabitants of Dacca. It never occurred to the Municipality that vaccinating 6,326 people out of a total population of 119,000 hardly amounted to a ruthless and successful campaign on its own, nor did it reflect that the small number of deaths after the epidemic year might not have been a direct result of the vaccination drive, but might equally have resulted from the development of natural immunity, or from a more conscientious attitude on the part of people who had been shocked by the epidemic. [235]

In the year 1927 - 1928, there was another epidemic in the city, but it was less severe than previous ones as only thirty people were recorded to have died from smallpox. The Municipality had performed 6,074 primary and 8,483 re-vaccinations in 1926-27, as against 5,451 and 3,320 respectively the previous year. A very considerable disinfection programme was also carried out on wells, houses and privies and drains. A warning was issued and distributed among the public.[236]

The outbreak had originated, according to the Municipality, in a single case which had been imported from Calcutta. The body had been buried in a private burial ground and the cause of death concealed as kala-azar. Four contacts developed. One of them carried it to Ward II, where it spread rapidly in the extremely congested area called Shankhari Bazar and passed on to Ward VII and then toward Ward IV. [237]

This epidemic apparently caused great anxiety to the Municipality. In 1928, it appointed two female vaccinators to provide the purdah-observing women with medical facilities. During the same year, the Municipality also showed much interest in inoculating the people against the other major killer, cholera. The Bengal Administration Report of 1928 - 1929 congratulated the city of Dacca where, during an epidemic, over twelve thousand people had been inoculated against cholera and only one death was reported to have occurred. [238]

In the following year, 1929 - 1930, the Municipality performed a record number of smallpox vaccinations - 24,622, comprising 6,166 primary vaccinations and 18,456 revaccinations; this compared with 5,521 primary vaccinations and 11,050 revaccinations the previous year. 87 per cent of the primary vaccinations were successful and 38 per cent of the revaccinations, the equivalent figures being 79 per cent and 31 per cent the previous

year. These measures, however, did not meet the crisis. According to the death register, 145 people died of smallpox in 1929 - 1930, as against 84 in 1928 - 1929. The following year, the number of vaccinations fell sharply, to 17,154 (5,406 primary, 11,748 revaccinations).[239]

The Municipality explained that public willingness to participate in the vaccination programme fluctuated according to the severity of the epidemic. The greater the number of fatalities, the more people were prepared to bare their arms for the vaccinator's needle: [240]

> vaccination is regarded as an unpleasant incident in a person's life.... It is mainly the fear of immediate death and not the advances of the vaccinator... which secures the acquiescence of the average rate payers in the city in this matter.

This could have accounted for the high rate of vaccination in the epidemic year of 1929 - 1930 and its decline the following year when the danger seemed to be past, only 75 people dying from the disease. [241]

Public fear of or lack of confidence in vaccination was only one side of the coin, though. For its part, the Municipality appears to have taken up its responsibility somewhat half-heartedly. Only a third of the revaccinations were successful. [242] This low rate of success may have been due to the use of bad serum, as Banga Noor claimed the public feared, [243] or to the failure of the Municipality to arrange for timely vaccination - once a year. Vaccinating people in time was equivalent to providing them 'with a weapon to strike out the disease when it comes'. But this important preventive measure was not conscientiously undertaken by many municipalities in Bengal, as the Director of Public Health (Dr. S.N. Sur) recorded in his report in 1935. [244] The municipalities normally increased the number of their vaccinators during the epidemic periods but not the number of vaccination inspectors who were supposed to watch over the vaccinators themselves. [245] Dacca Munici-

pality had only one vaccination inspector till the end of the period under review although the honesty of the vaccinators was not above suspicion, and they may not have performed as many vaccinations as they claimed. It is still common knowledge today that municipal vaccinators do not visit a large proportion of the people recorded on their vaccinations lists. The Municipality provided them with bicycles, but these were an unpleasant means of transport during the gruelling heat of high summer and the floods of the long monsoon, while their salaries were insufficient to inspire them to make great efforts to call scrupulously on every family on their lists - especially when they could seldom expect a welcoming reception from clients who were suspicious of vaccination in the first place. The failure of the Muncipality was made apparent in 1935 - 1936 when a smallpox epidemic claimed no less than 546 lives in the city.[246] Despite the distribution of health posters and leaflets and continuous advice to the municipalities by the Public Health Department, the efforts made by the municipalities and district boards were 'never satisfactory'. More than four-fifths of the population of Bengal still remained unvaccinated.[247]

Instead of sharing the blame, the Municipality consistently shifted it all onto the people. The chairmen wrote impressive accounts of the vaccination measures taken by the civic body. Special stress was put on the keenness shown by the Inspector of Vaccinations and the five male vaccinators in 1940 - 1941.[248] Self-laudatory reports, however, could not succeed in checking the outbreaks of smallpox in the town. The Municipality argued that this was because a large number of children every year failed to be inoculated against various diseases, and many more children entered the city unvaccinated and thus unprotected from disease. The Municipality also proclaimed its firm belief that much infantile illness could be avoided if mothers could be persuaded to comply with in-

structions from trained Health Visitors.[249] This was quite unrealistic in view of the fact that there were only two Medical Officers of Health and one female visiting nurse maintained by the Municipality for a city of more than 200,000 inhabitants.[250]

Fever

Fever was another great killer. It 'makes such ample havoc that little room seems to be left for other diseases'.[251] The term was used in death registers in a rather vague way; under the heading of 'fever' came kala-azar, malaria, influenza, tuberculosis, enteric fever and various other maladies which were never specifically reported.

As elsewhere in Asia, Europe and Africa, there was a severe influenza epidemic in Dacca in the years 1918 - 1919: as many as 1,632 people were reported to have died from fever in that one year, but it was impossible to establish how many of these were influenza cases.[252] On the one hand, the Municipality had no arrangement for verifying the causes of death and on the other, relations of the deceased attributed nearly all deaths either to fever or cough, no matter what the true causes were.[253] Only qualified staff, employed solely to verify the causes of death, could have improved the situation; the Municipality admitted that such a service was urgently necessary, but it was well beyond its financial means.[254] The confusion was worsened by the doctors' unwillingness to co-operate: they never sent the Municipality any intimation of infectious diseases which came to their notice. Consequently, the Municipality could not take the timely preventative measures to stop the diseases from spreading. A chairman of the Municipality complained that despite 'the distribution of stamped postcards to the medical practitioners, they did not take the trouble of making use of them!.[255] Voluntary notification therefore proved unsatisfactory, but compulsion through

legislation was impracticable, as it was up to the doctors to diagnose the disease and determine the cause of death. This enabled them to turn the situation to their advantage - the more serious the disease, the better their business.

The Municipality's efforts to tackle this faceless disease known as fever were manifested in the maintenance of three kala-azar centres in the city. Only a small fraction of the population, however, could get any real benefit from these. The total attendance of patients at these centres varied between 400 and 700 annually. The Mitford Hospital also had arrangements to treat kala-azar patients, but the bulk of sufferers were treated by private practitioners.[256]

The kala-azar centres run by the Municipality did not prove to be a great success. The treatment given by them failed in about half of the cases. This was, in a chairman's view, largely due to the 'ignorant behaviour' of many invalids who did not understand the importance of sustained treatment and dropped out after a few visits to the centres. The Municipality complained that: [257]

> the majority of patients do not seem to realize that it is risky to discontinue treatment prematurely.

The number of visits to treatment centres could have been reduced if patients had been given medicine to use at home, but here the Municipality ran up against its own chronic handicap - lack of money. Such a course would have been prohibitively expensive, especially when there was a strong possibility that patients would not use the medicine judiciously. The recorded numbers of deaths from kala-azar in the city over a decade were as follows:

Year	No. of deaths
1929	144
1930	118
1939	119

Year	No. of deaths
1940	85
1941	92

The downward trend may be a genuine picture or just a faulty record. If the former is true, then it shows that the city, though not perhaps the Municipality, was putting up a good fight against this disease. [258]

Malaria was another widely known disease feared all over India, which, it was recorded, [259]

> alone kills off two or three millions every year, even in normal years when there is no special epidemic, and weakens and lowers the efficiency of many millions more.

It was by far 'the greatest scourge' of Bengal. [260] Although Dacca was not in the high malaria mortality zone in Bengal, the disease was very widespread in particular areas of the district. [261] It was transmitted through the anopheles mosquito, which thrived mainly in jungles, stagnant pools, swamps, ditches and open drains. The Madhupur Jungle some miles away to the north of Dacca city was 'generally considered to be a most malarious tract', and over eighty per cent of the deaths in Kapasia Thana were attributed to 'fever' (i.e. malaria). The disease was particularly virulent in Manikganj also, because the high subsoil level of the water impeded drainage. [262] Although fewer deaths were recorded from malaria in Dacca city than from kala-azar, it was more talked about and feared than other diseases. The reason, probably, was that it was quick to devitalize patients, but slow to cure. The total death toll from malaria was usually well under fifty per year during the period under review. There was a general awareness among the public of the danger of malaria and its possible treatment - much to the credit of the voluntary associations, especially the Bengal Public Health Association's anti-malaria campaign and also to the Public Health Department's strong and continuous propaganda against malaria in Bengal throughout our period. [263] Propaganda always has a bigger impact on

towns than villages. Besides, Dacca, being the largest urban and educational centre in Eastern Bengal, had better hospital facilities, more doctors and more intensive educational propaganda through the University and College students than other less urban areas in the region. These factors combined to give Dacca Municipality the lowest average malarial death rate in Eastern Bengal.[264] Apart from the general sanitation of the town, the Municipality's role in the fight against malaria was confined to the distribution of free quinine tablets among those who wished to procure them. The tablets were provided by the Public Health Department of Bengal. The major responsibility for eradicating malaria was taken up by the Dacca Anti-Malaria Committee after its creation in 1933. The Committee was presided over and controlled by the District Magistrate. The Municipality had no administrative influence over it. But at least the Committee's work against malaria took one burden off the shoulders of the Municipality. [265]

Phthisis (Consumption)

Phthisis is generally known as an urban disease. Its death toll, therefore, was the largest in Calcutta, the biggest urban centre in Bengal. More than half of the total number of deaths from respiratory diseases in Bengal occurred in Calcutta. [266] Dacca was the third in line compared to Calcutta and Howrah. The following table shows its progress in Dacca: [267]

Year:	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
Recorded number of deaths	48	55	67	74	79	83	114

Clearly, the disease was progressing at an alarming rate; the death rate in 1927 was nearly three per mille. This was 'a danger signal' to the public, as the chairman in 1927 phrased it. But it is difficult to be certain about

these statistics in view of the fact that the quality of recording various diseases is generally viewed as doubtful. There might have been an improvement in diagnosing the disease more accurately. The growth may indicate a steadily improving quality of statistics or an influx of population. In any case the municipal authority showed concern about the danger of consumption in the city.[268] Regulations controlling buildings, notifications of cases in the early stages, treatment of affected individuals under suitable environments, hygienic education for the general public - these were the lines along which an effective preventative campaign could have been conducted. The Municipality understood this: but it would have meant granting larger powers and additional resources to the Municipality, both of which were likely to be highly unpopular with the ratepayers. Instead, the Municipality suggested that a non-official organisation manned by enthusiastic medical men and social workers was the answer. Such a body could launch an educative campaign to arouse public interest and secure public co-operation with running the risk of the ratepayers mounting a counter-campaign to stop paying taxes.[269] The idea was fine, but it was never actually put into practice.

The number of deaths attributed to the disease in 1930, 1940 and 1941 was 103, 84 and 73 respectively.[270] These statistics, if accurate, indicate a definite improvement for which the Municipality could not, and did not, claim any credit. There may have been a connection between this fall and the work done by the T.B. Association at the Mitford Hospital.[271]

Of the other diseases mentioned in the health reports - i.e. enteric fever, measles, meningitis, 'other fevers', whooping cough, pneumonia, suicide, wounds, accidents, snake-bite, diphtheria, tuberculosis of the joints, leprosy, cancer and 'all other causes' - the Municipality took up only death from and at child-birth and leprosy with some seriousness.

Infant and maternal mortality

Nowhere could a campaign for 'fewer and better babies be of more value' than in India, where child mortality and maternal mortality were appallingly high. [272] The birth rate in India was double that in England, and so also was the death rate[273] - and, apart from the diseases already mentioned, it was to a considerable extent infant and maternal mortality which pushed the death rate so high:[274]

> The babies of India are for the most part brought into this world by the help of untrained women known as dais, whose calling is hereditary, and who are entirely innocent of any knowledge of antiseptic methods. More than half the cases of maternal mortality are due to septic conditions.

The lack of education among men and especially among women posed an insurmountable obstacle towards any effective advancement in public health.

Just one hospital in the city - Mitford Hospital - could not provide sufficient facilities to the women of Dacca for child birth. There were two more hospitals in Dacca - one for the army and the other for the Railway employees. One which was accessible to the public had only one women's ward and so was not available to many, besides being unacceptable to an overwhelming majority on socio-religious grounds. Since hospital services were not cheaply available in sufficient quantity and quality to satisfy the pockets and the religions of people, most families relied upon the midwives. The age-old tradition of having babies at home with the assistance of indigenous dais was as

much due to ingrained conservatism, as to the absence of better alternatives. One way of improving the situation was to train the dais in elementary hygiene. This actually started on a modest scale at the Mitford Hospital in 1910, and ever since Dacca Municipality had contributed Rs 120 to the dai training class each year.[275] The idea was to equip the city with trained midwives, not only to assist mothers at childbirth under more hygienic conditions than before, but also to give them enlightened advice on the rearing of their new-born children. The other way was to send visiting nurses to the expecting mothers. A step in this direction was taken by the Municipality of Dacca in 1919, when it appointed a 'visiting nurse', whose job was to go from door to door, educating the women in motherhood and urging them to have their children vaccinated as early as possible.[276]

This measure was no more than a feeble attempt to scratch the surface of a vast problem. One visiting nurse visiting all the expecting mothers or all the married women in Dacca was indeed an unrealistic proposition. In the absence of records it is difficult to establish whether she concentrated on one ward or more, whether her advice was followed by the women and what kind of reception she obtained from menfolk of Dacca. Perhaps her appointment was necessary just to keep up the required standard of a first class municipality of Bengal. But her presence could not have possibly made a noticeable difference to the infant mortality rate in Dacca. And ironically the infant mortality rate went up from 30.9 per cent in 1919 to 31.2 per cent in 1920 - during the first year of the visiting nurse's appearance in Dacca.[277] In fact, the high infant mortality rate in Dacca persisted in the following two decades also, largely negating the Municipality's claims to have improved public health. Municipal reports never put any emphasis on the 'ever-present danger of disease'[278] to which new-born infants were more exposed and susceptible than adults, but only on other factors for which the municipal authority was not directly responsible.

The oft-repeated causes of infant mortality in municipal reports were premature labour, unskilled management on the part of the mothers in rearing their infants, and the incompetence of the untrained dais. Poverty was also mentioned as a major factor responsible for promoting this havoc among the infants of Dacca.[279] Obviously, the Municipality could do nothing to improve the general economic condition of the populace. But about the necessity to increase the number of health visitors and midwives, which was not completely beyond its power, the Municipality chose to remain silent.

The incentive to improve infants' and mothers' health came in Bengal as part of the All-India movement in this field, initiated by the Countess of Lytton, which with the official and voluntary agencies took it up as part of the Public Health issue. The Bengal Public Health Department started collecting data for deaths from child birth and the infant mortality rate in order to improve the health of the mothers and the infants. In 1921, a number of voluntary agencies, under the auspices of the Red Cross League, started establishing infant welfare centres in India.[280] One such association, formed in 1921 in Dacca city, was called the Child Welfare and Maternity Trust. Although it was established at the initiative of the Dacca District Red Cross League, official support for it was not lacking. The trust was run by the elite women, both European and Indian, and financed mainly by the Dacca Nawab and the District Magistrate who was made its president. The purpose of this body was to reduce the infant mortality in the city by training women as nurses and also as prospective mothers, so that they attained a reasonable standard of cleanliness and learnt 'mother craft'.[281] Being patronized by influential people, official and non-official, the centre attracted the attention and admiration of the Director of Bengal Public Health Department and was recorded by him as 'a very successful centre' in Dacca.[282]

Another welfare centre was opened by the Dacca branch

of the Bengal Presidency Council of Women in 1939 in Rokonpur. This was called Nari Kalyan O Shishu Mangal ('Women's and Children's Welfare').[283] Two other similar bodies - Nari O Shishu Kalyan Ashram (Women and Children Welfare Centre) and Muslim Nari Kalyan Samity (Muslim Women's Welfare Association) - were also trying to look after the welfare of children and mothers in the city. Dacca Municipality contributed a fixed annual sum to all these bodies; Dacca Maternity and Child Welfare Trust received Rs 1,200, while the rest were given Rs 120 each.[284] This discrimination can perhaps be explained by the special status of the Welfare Trust, having the District Magistrate as its president.[285] The voluntary associations and the Municipality together could have been a powerful force against maternal and child mortality in the city. A number of legal provisions were already in existence which could have helped this service greatly if sufficient advantage was taken of them, particularly by the local authorities. The Bengal Municipal Act of 1932 contained provisions for midwives and nurses and child welfare work in general. The Bengal local Self Government Act, 1933, dealt with the training and employment of midwives by the local bodies.[286] Despite these legal opportunities there was very little sign of activity in many mofussil municipalities in Bengal. The disappointed Director of Public Health Department, Bengal, Lt. Col. A.C. Chatterji, reported in 1936 that a large number of municipalities in Bengal did not employ any midwives or nurses as they did not consider their service to be a vital one 'which in most of the civilised countries has now become recognized as an essential function of the local authorities'.[287] Dacca Municipality was one of the more consciencious ones in Bengal in this respect as it had been contributing to the dai training scheme in Mitford Hospital since 1910 and in welfare centres since 1921. The services of these dais were made available to the public free of charge. Dacca was also one of the few municipalities in Bengal which employed health visitors.[288] In 1937 Dacca had two maternity and child welfare centres, three trained

visitors, nineteen trained midwives, and five trained dais. Narayangnj coped with this vast problem only with one trained midwife. Even Howrah did not have any trained visitors to educate the women in maternity problems. In 1937 it had seven trained midwives and seven trained dais to do this job. Perhaps Howrah Municipality depended more heavily on its three voluntary welfare centres. [289]

The Bengal Public Health Department, at the initiative of its Director, Lt-Col A.C. Chatterji, started taking increased interest in maternal mortality in Bengal. The Director was quite appalled to find out that Bengal local authorities, voluntary associations and the government all together did not spend more than 'a ridicilous sum of one pie' per woman per annum. [290] At the Director's relentless effort, the government brought nurse training and dai training directly under the Public Health Department in 1939. A lady Superintendent's post was created and filled by the Public Health Department to supervise the work on maternal and child mortality in the province, to educate public opinion and suggest means of improvement in this field. The government also started encouraging the local bodies to employ health visitors and offered to pay part of their salaries. New welfare centres were to be given generous financial aid and the old ones were to receive funds for improvements. [291] Under this scheme Dacca improved its position and one more maternity and child welfare centre was opened in 1939. From this year the child welfare centres came under the management of a local committee consisting of 40 per cent official members (e.g. District Magistrate, Civil Surgeon, District Judge and so on) and nominated members of the District Board, Municipality and Union Board. Of the remaining 60 per cent, 30 per cent were women representatives and 30 per cent men interested in child welfare and helpful in raising the funds or in the development of the services. This was done at the suggestion of the Public Health Department, presumably

with the objective of improving the financial condition of these centres as well as coordinating the work of various bodies, including the municipalities, in this very important public service.[292] A number of municipalities improved the number of their public health staff after 1939.[293] But the health of the infants and mothers still remained an overpowering problem in Bengal. In Dacca city neither infant mortality nor maternal mortality showed any marked improvement during the period under review. In 1929 - 1930, the infant mortality was 252.8 per 1,000 births; in 1930 - 1931, the figure was 205.5; after ten years, in 1940 - 1941, infant mortality per 1,000 births was recorded as about 230, which does not indicate a steady fall. The same was the case with maternal mortality. 47 out of 1,000 pregnant women died during child birth in 1930 - 1931; a decade later, in 1940 - 1941, the corresponding figure was 45 per 1,000.[294] Despite such a slow improvement, if it can indeed be called an improvement, the Municipality appeared satisfied with the situation. It rested on the laurels of the voluntary associations, praising the 'excellent work' of the Dacca Maternity and Child Welfare Trust and the 'admirable and strenuous' efforts made by the Nari Kalyan O Shishu Mangal for the welfare of the city's mothers and children.[295]

Leprosy

Not more than five to nine people died from leprosy in Dacca every year,[296] but it was nevertheless a dreaded disease, on account of its horrific symptoms. Afflicted beggars, however, were able to make capital out of their misfortune; the sight of their live but rotting limbs inspired fear, disgust and also sympathy from the public, but the spectacle was an embarrassment to the Municipality. It provided free treatment to lepers, but, like so many other matters, it was too big a problem for the Municipality to deal with. The District Gazetteer recorded in 1912 that Dacca had more lepers than any other part of East Bengal.[297]

The city was likely to have a larger concentration of lepers than other lesser urban centres of Eastern Bengal. But as a district Dacca had less leprosy than Chittagong Hill Tracts and Mymensingh as the censuses recorded in 1921 and 1931. In Bengal as a whole Dacca was no more than a middle ranking leper district - the most afflicted areas in the province being Birbhum, Burdwan and Bankura. [298]

A Leprosy Relief Centre was opened in Dacca in 1933. [299] Under the auspices of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association a number of leprosy clinics cropped up in the thirties, in various parts of Bengal, at the initiative of the local bodies. Dacca Municipality took up the free treatment of the lepers in Dacca as a part of its public health scheme from 1933.[300] It received an additional booster from three officers of the Bengal branch of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association who occasionally visited various places and educational institutions to diagnose leprosy and encourage the people and the local bodies to bring the patients under medical treatment. [301]

Dacca treated as many as 600 patients in 1941, in the leprosy treatment centre in the city. As most of these people were tramps, the famine of 1943 must have hit them hard and in 1947 only 280 patients were recorded to have been treated in the centre. [302]These figures may not indicate an actual fall in the disease as people in Bengal always try to conceal this disease as much as possible. Leprosy is commonly believed by both the Hindu and the Muslim communities to be a divine judgement on the sinners. This is why the concealment of this affliction was very widespread in Bengal especailly among the women of respectable families.[303] It was no less feared by the menfolk either. Leprosy was 'such an object of odium' that the afflicted men were also 'under the most serious temptation to conceal the fact lest they be thrown out of employment or socially ostracized'.[304]

There are still a great many lepers in the bazars of

Dacca. But it would be a futile exercise to read any recorded statistics as an indication of a decrease or an increase of leprosy in the city.

Other sanitary measures

The disposal of the dead was another crucial aspect of public health for which the Municipality had responsibility. Until municipal regulations started to interfere with local practices in the mid-nineteenth century, the Muslims of India used to bury their dead within the boundaries of their own dwellings or wherever possible nearby, depending on the economic condition of the family. These practices were undoubtedly detrimental to the salubirty of the cities, but the problem was not unique to India. Conditions were much worse in nineteenth century Britain where urban graveyards became so overcrowded that:[305]

> the rate of new interments exceeded the rate of decay. The height of the ground rose, and hideous means were employed by the gravediggers to provide space for new intakes. To the mental distress and abhorrence excited by such barbarous conditions was added the physical nausea induced by the stench which pervaded not only the graveyards themselves but the surrounding streets as well.

Members of the poorest classes in Britain often had to share their living quarters with rotting and maggot-infested corpses for as long as twelve days, while scraping up the funds for the funeral.[306] In 1843, Edwin Chadwick presented a powerful report on London's burial grounds. He proposed that churchyards and ancient burial grounds should be closed and replaced by public cemeteries under the management of a public burial board. His scheme became law in 1850 and London's burial problem began, gradually, to be solved.[307]

In Dacca, the first steps to improve the facilities for burying the dead was taken in 1865, a year after the formal establishment of the Municipality. The lead came from the District Magistrate, other Europeans and the Nawab of Dacca.

A number of old and insanitary grounds were closed and public burial grounds were opened by the Municipality.[308] Another burial ground was created in Gandaria in 1889 as a result of a private initiative. It was chiefly financed by a police inspector, Rai Saheb Dina Nath Sen, on condition that the Municipality closed the old scattered burial grounds in the area.[309]

During the period under review, there were four municipal graveyards in Dacca. The Azimpura and Jurain Burial Grounds were on the north-western and southern outskirts of the city. The Hazaribagh Burial ground was in the southwest region. The Gandaria burial ground was the only well kept one towards the eastern part of the city and was quite near the densely populated areas. Mullahs appointed by the Municipality officiated at all the grounds to ensure that the dead were buried in accordance with Islamic injunctions and in a hygienic way. They supplemented their meagre salaries of Rs 40 per month by taking a cut from the grave-diggers, who depended on them for contracts.[310]

The municipal burial grounds were extended and improved from time to time, but it proved impossible to close down the private grounds altogether. The District Gazetteer of 1912 described the unauthorised burial grounds which were scattered all over the city:[311]

> Cemeteries for Muhammadans have been opened by the municipality, but Muhammadan graves are to be found on almost any piece of waste land in the suburbs and afford a far from pleasing spectacle. A framework of bamboo is placed above the body and the earth heaped upon it. When the bamboos rot the earth falls in and the grave is left as an empty hole two or three feet deep. A piece of land closely pitted with these holes has a melancholy appearance.

Five particularly insanitary burial grounds in Gandaria attracted the attention of the Health Inspector in 1921 and he recommended their immediate closure. Unfortunately, the demand for graves in the city was higher than the land the Municipality was able to provide for them and so his report

sparked off a heated controversy in the Municipality. Although the District Magistrate and the vice-chairman, Babu Dhirendra Chandra Rai, supported the Health Inspector, the majority of the commissioners totally opposed his suggestion. They did not dare to close the existing insanitary burial grounds without extending the municipal cemeteries sufficiently, as this would have offended the people. Even Khwaja Yousuff Khan Bahadur, who was well known as a champion of public health, went along with the majority view.[312] None of these burial grounds was closed during the period under review.

Unlike Muslims, Hindus burn their dead. Cremation usually takes place near a river at a particular place known in Bengal as a shashan ('cremation ground') or a chita-ghat ('burning ghat'). Like the cemeteries of the Muslims, the shashans of the Hindus were also insanitary, especially in the nineteenth century when partially burnt bodies were often thrown into the river. There were two main burning ghats in Dacca. One was on Kamrangi Char, an island in the Buriganga, and the other was at Postagola, on the bank of the river. Both were improved during the period under review. The Municipality constructed a pakka ghat (stairs) for the tank at Postagola Burning Ghat in 1921 and a piece of land was acquired by the Municipality near Kamrangi Char Burning Ghat in the same year for the burial of Hindu infants.[313] The Kamrangi Char Burning Ghat was also improved through the charity of Basanta Kumari Dasi who commemorated her late husband, Gobinda Prasad Das, a wealthy merchant, by bearing the entire cost of constructing a rest house in the compound in 1928.[314] Later she installed four electric lights in it.[315] Postagola Ghat also received electric lights around the same time, through the generosity of a citizen named Babu Bepin Behari Roy, on condition that his name appeared as contributor, engraved on the wall of the burning ghat, above the signature of the municipal chairman.[316]

As the city's population grew rapidly, the burning ghats, like the Muslim graveyards, proved inadequate for the demands made on them, and so the people sometimes took to burning

their dead in unauthorized places. One such spot was used so frequently that it became a de facto burning ghat. As it was in Ticca Tully, a crowded area, the Municipality received constant complaints from the residents of the neighbourhood. Consequently, this unofficial burning ghat was brought under strict municipal control.[317]

However, it was widely believed that the Municipality could not prevent Hindus from throwing partially cremated bodies and dead cattle into the river. Two European residents of Narayanganj, a few miles from Dacca, observed the condition of the river in the 1920's:[318]

> Sometimes a marigold garland from a festival or funeral floated past, or the corpse of a kid, swollen with the water; sometimes there was a whole dead cow with a vulture perched on it. The river took them all away.

As part of its concern with the general sanitation of its city, the Municipality took responsibility for providing parks which, as Pitt the Elder used to say of London, could serve as the 'lungs' of the city.[319] In the northern suburbs of Dacca, open space was no problem. The Civil Lines and the University enjoyed Ramna's wide green fields and fresh air.

The old part of the city, however, was not so fortunate. Like all old towns, it had grown up over the years without any planning, a network of narrow, congested streets. Nevertheless, the guardians of the city, from Mughal times down to the present day, had appreciated the value of open parkland in crowded urban centres and so, by the beginning of the period under review, the old city already possessed four parks, including one reserved for women. These were Victoria Park, Coronation Park, Rajar Dewry Park and Lady's Park. When he visited the city in 1916, Professor Patrick Geddes was struck by Dacca's potential as a garden city. In his opinion, it could be compared with only one or two other Indian towns, 'which might be as easily, simply and inexpensively provided with a park system... upon an extent and with an effect not

only rivalling that of great cities, but surpassing most of them'. [320] He put forward a number of schemes to take advantage of the 'very best of all the open places of Dacca'. For example, he envisaged a line of trees along the river bank, with pleasant gardens on the little islands in the river. He even had plans for transforming some parts of Dolai Khal into 'water parks' and the tanks in Lalbagh into beauty spots by the simple expedient of planting trees around them. The trees, he pointed out, would improve both the appearance and health of the areas without disturbing the 'dilapidated and insanitary... busti hovels' which surrounded the three 'fine tanks' in Lalbagh.[321]

Unfortunately, Geddes' proposals did not move the ratepayers of Dacca who remained unaware of the aesthetic or healthy qualities of parks. Indeed, the attitude of the ordinary citizens was manifested in 1942, when the Municipality had to reject firmly, on aesthetic grounds, a 'public request' that Rajar Dewry Park be converted into a daily market. [322]

There were no votes to be gained from devoting scarce resources to the creation of parks. Geddes' imaginative plans for a park system, therefore, depended on the enthusiasm of individual municipal commissioners or chairmen. Although a scheme for a new park had been prepared as early as 1916-17 by a Municipal Engineer stimulated by Geddes' visit, it did not materialize for another two decades; at last, in 1940, a new park was created on a plot of vacant municipal land in Rajendra Banerjee Street, east of the Police Station. In the same year, Coronation Park was modernized. A pavilion was erected to protect the people on the Buckland Bund from rain and a radio was also installed, [323] presumably to keep the masses well informed about the progress of the war. Coronation Park was the obvious choice for such a unique amenity because it regularly drew a large number of visitors as a result of its proximity to the Buckland Bund - the most attractive part of the riverfront. Rajar Dewry Park and Lady's Park were improved soon after, in 1942 and 1944 respectively.[324]

This modest effort was the sum of Dacca Municipality's contribution to the development of the city's parks during the period under review. Dacca's immense potential in this respect remained no more than an idea in the mind of a visiting town planner.

In order to improve the general sanitation of the city, the Municipality spent money every year on filling up, clearing or disinfecting insanitary tanks and ditches, and removing undergrowth and 'obnoxious vegetation'. These were mentioned in the municipal budget under the title 'other sanitary requirements'. In 1920 - 1921, Rs 1,840 was spent under this head;[325] after twenty years, in 1940 - 1941, the expenditure had increased fourfold, to Rs 7,468.[326] Many notices were also issued to landowners from time to time in connection with sanitary improvements. The following table shows the notices issued and the compliances secured:[327]

Year	Notices issued	Compliances secured
1924 - 1925	817	277
1926 - 1927	597 (497 pending from previous year)	194 (22 cancelled or withdrawn)
1929 - 1930	1,137 (454 pending from previous year)	209
1940 - 1941	736 (450 pending from previous year)	157 (60 cancelled or withdrawn)

These figures indicate that the Municipality's notices were largely ignored. The people seemed unruffled by threats of fines and prosecutions. The Municipality justified its ineffectiveness by arguing that the poverty of the landowners concerned prevented them from taking effective measures and that therefore offenders often had to be dealt with leniently.[328] This may only be partly true; bribery was also widely believed

to have an important part to play, but it was difficult to prove. Some remarks made by the Commissioner of Burdwan Division are revealing in this connection:[329]

> What happens after the notices and the results of the prosecutions we are not told. It would be an exceedingly interesting matter for detailed enquiry to find out what had really been done. The same formula appears every year with such persistence that in time one accepts it as a formula, especially when walking round any of the municipalities you come across the same old offenders.

Public works

Dacca is more a city of bylanes than of roads:[330]

> For Dacca suffers from all the manifold drawbacks of an old Eastern city. The streets and lanes are extraordinarily narrow; there are neither side walks nor room for them, and as the foot passengers wander at will all over the roadway, continual shouting or the ringing of a bell are required to clear a passage for a wheeled vehicle. In the absence of stone, the roads have been metalled with burnt brick which is unable to stand the heavy traffic, so that the surface is worn into holes and in all but the wettest weather is intolerably dusty.

This was Dacca in 1916 - after improvements had been made on the environs of the city - such as metalling the Nawabpur Road with stone - during its life as the capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam between 1905 to 1911. Although the streets of the city had been congested with 'ramshackle ticka gharis' (horse carriages) and 'lumbering bullock carts' since before the turn of the century,[331] and with bicycles and cars in more recent years, Professor Patrick Geddes was surprised to see in 1916 that the city:[332]

> too much still practically retains its old village character, with only its one main thoroughfare near the river east and west, and one north and south between river and station.

The improvement of the roads was therefore an urgent necessity in Dacca; 'public works' virtually meant building

and repairing roads. A great deal of municipal expenditure was devoted to public works which were usually the third largest item in the annual budget.[333] Although the heading also included the construction and maintenance of public parks, sheds, bridges and the town hall, it was always roads which took the lion's share of the money allocated, as the following table indicates:[334]

Expenditure on Public Works

(rupees)

Year	Establishment	Buildings	Roads	Stores
1920-21	11,504	738	41,246	791
1940-41	15,022	8,279	52,407	287
1946-47	20,189	3,069	76,249	90

As far as roads and streets were concerned, there was a great difference between the old part of the town and the new, New Dacca consisted mostly of the empty racecourse, the quality residential area of Wari, the planned Civil Lines with straight streets and the spacious University area where congestion was not yet a problem. In old Dacca, palaces, slums, houses, shops and bazars, mosques and temples, schools, a college, a hospital and the new cinemas were all juxtaposed, and the streets were narrow and twisted, obviously not constructed with heavy traffic in mind. The increasing number of tikka garis, bullock carts, bicycles,cycle rickshaws, cars, buses, trucks and lorries created intolerable congestion for many of the lanes were not even wide enough for two tikka garis to pass each other. Widening them, though, would have meant demolishing people's houses, which was not an easy task for elected commissioners to perform. Even the widest streets in this area were too narrow for the traffic which attempted to use them. Old Dacca managed to depress the usually optimisitc town planner Patrick Geddes to such an extent that he failed to come up with a solution, resigning himself to the fact that, 'no widening scheme can be suggested; the city cannot afford it.'[335] He did have some suggestions, though, for lightening the traffic. A street

could be opened between the main thoroughfare to the west of the Police Station and the crowded area of Pannitola, giving the latter 'the needed access to improve its peculiarly backward sanitation, here notorious'.[336] He also recommended that the Central Jail could be moved from the heart of the city to a rural area, opening up a large space which 'should some day become the fine, central avenue or "Mall" of the city'. This Mall would be the connecting link between the overcrowded old Dacca in the south-east and the model suburbs of Wari, the Civil Lines and the University area in the north, relieving the traffic congestion in the two main existing thoroughfares. A number of streets could be opened to link the new street with the old lanes which were too crooked and narrow to act as proper urban thoroughfares.[337] However, Geddes' 'conservative surgery' to improve the city's roads was not taken up by the Municipality; his report was consigned to a shelf in the dusty record room of the municipal office.

Among the important steps which were taken by the Municipality in connection with communications in the city was the construction of two new bridges and the repair of the old and important Iron Suspension Bridge. One of the new bridges joined Chandpur Lane and Baddanagar Lane on the two banks of the Dolai Khal. Work was started in 1933 and completed in 1938.[338] The other bridge, started at the same time, was finished in 1935. It eased the flow of traffic by crossing a branch of the Dolai Khal which cut through Purana Paltan.[339] The Iron Suspension Bridge was also over the Dolai Khal, on the main approach road from Narayanganj to Dacca. The bridge was fast deteriorating as a result of the ever-mounting volume of traffic, particularly motor lorries, making use of it since the First World War.[340] Jute merchants in Narayanganj started to use motor lorries for freight in the 1920 s, but the pressure on the bridge increased sharply during the 2nd World War when it was regularly used by heavy military vehicles. Many of these were bought up as surplus by businessmen after the 1st World War and so the flow of traffic was maintained. It was swelled in 1947 by the introduction of passenger buses.[341]

The streets and bridges of the old city were not designed to cope with the wear and tear caused by the heavy motor vehicles of the twentieth century. The Municipality appealed to the government for funds, as the rebuilding of the Dacca - Narayanganj bridge was too expensive a project for it to undertake on its own. It first attempted to attract government's attention to the urgency of the task in 1925, [342] and after a decade it succeeded. Government funds were at last made available in 1935 - 1936; the bridge was reconstructed and the portion of the Dacca-Narayanganj road coming under the Municipality's jurisdiction was also improved. [343]

Footpaths were another urgent necessity. The pedestrians who thronged the narrow streets of Dacca competed with the increasingly congested traffic. The continuous ringing of bells by desperate rickshaw-wallas and cyclists, and the hooting of cars, and lorries made the authorities aware of the need to provide side-walks for foot passengers. Between 1934 and 1937, Nawabpur Road, the widest street in the city, was provided with pavements. [344] Nothing could be done for old Dacca, however, where the absence of footpaths is still a major problem: whatever little space pedestrians can find to use as a footpath is obstructed by numerous beggars, mainly professional invalids put on wheeled wooden beds by their agents.

In order to improve the look of the city and relieve the workload of the road-sweepers, public dustbins were installed on both sides of the main street between Sadarghat and Purana Paltan during 1939 - 1940. [345] In addition, parking places for buses and taxis were set aside by the Municipality at Victoria Park and Chauk Bazar during the war. [346]

Private enterprise in improving the streets were confined to a handful of individuals who were perhaps more inspired by the thought of having streets named after them than by genuine public spirit. Thus a kacha street near Toynbee Circular Road was made pakka (concrete) in 1933 - 1934

after a private contribution, and was renamed Bhagabati Banerjee Road.[347] In the previous year, the dilapidated Enayatganj Road was concreted and transformed into Nilambar Shaha Road.[348] In 1946 - 1947, Abhoy Das Lane was similarly improved, becoming Hiralal Banerjee Street.[349]

The road system remained the major priority in Dacca; and despite the increasing amount of money spent on it, it was inadequate to accommodate the growing volume of traffic. The most effective way of easing the congestion would have been to open new thoroughfares as Patrick Geddes had suggested - but this would have meant antagonizing householders who would not have taken kindly to being evicted for the sake of a few roads. The Municipality therefore decided that it would be less controversial to retard the growth of traffic by limiting the number of rickshaws on the roads, Hackney carriages escaped control because they had a powerful patron; the Nawab of Dacca was chairman of the city's Hackney Carriage Association.[350]

During the Second World War, as a result of inflation, the fares of rickshaws and hackney carriages increased enormously. A man might have to spend Rs 30 per month only to go to work. Most of the population could scarcely afford such expense. Wartime rationing meant that those who had cars were permitted a ration of only four gallons of petrol per month. As this was insufficient for them, they also depended on public transport. Although it had been recorded that hackneys and rickshaws were crowding the streets, this was not the experience of most travellers, who found their number inadequate for so heavily populated a city as Dacca. Dr. S.K. Sen, a municipal commissioner, reported that he, like many others, had to wait an hour for transport, especially between nine and eleven in the morning. Despite the great demand for increasing the number of cycle rickshaws, the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police argued in favour of actually reducing their numbers. They considered rickshaws dangerous and unsuitable for large and populous cities, citing the example of Calcutta where they were banned

to avoid accidents. The District Magistrate believed that the fleet of hackney carriages should be increased instead, as he felt they had 'a good reputation both for efficiency and cheapness of hire'. Rickshaws, however, were still less costly and in the end the quota allowed on the roads was raised from 175 to 225; the number of hackney carriages continued to be unlimited.[351]

Controlling the number of rickshaws was not enough to solve the problem of traffic congestion, which has grown considerably worse in recent times.[352] The pressing need was to widen the roads, and in order to finance roadworks, the Municipality, from 1929 onwards, pressed the government for more money or, alternatively, for the power to tax motor vehicles. Some commissioners pointed out that it was unfair that the poor owners of hackney carriages and bullock carts had to pay road tax, while the 'rich folks' with private cars bore no share of the expenditure incurred annually on the repair of the roads they 'so plentifully help to damage'.[353] The government, however, ignored such comments. In 1939, the government condemned the old steam roller used by the Municipality for road building and ordered the civic body to buy a new one. Although this was done immediately, it was insufficient to bear the burden of road-building, and so progress continued to be slow.[354] When communal riots broke out in 1941, the Municipality raised the issue again, reporting that the roads were deteriorating as a result of the constant plying of lorries and motor trucks at 'tremendous speed', heavily loaded with armed guards and troops; communal riots themselves further hindered repairwork.[355]

According to the Municipality, then, lack of money, heavy lorries and communal riots prevented it from keeping roads in a good state of repair. Certainly, it needed some excuse to justify its inertia. Over a period of fifteen years, from 1926 to 1941, it succeeded in building only 10.68 miles of road to service a rapidly growing population.[356]

Its successor in modern Dacca has carried on in the same

tradition, as the following poem, or rather doggerel, printed in a recent edition of The Bangladesh Observer shows: [357]

"Hallo Bemused! How do you do?"
"Oh fine, fine thankue".
"Then come to my house tonight
And dine with us. All right?"
"Yes, if I can get a copter, or..."
"But what do you need a copter for?"
"Except by air, tell me how
To go to Malibagh or Khilgaon.
With roads in bad disrepair
Can't go by car or rickshaw there.
Nor can I take a boat-trip
Because the water is not yet deep.
The only other way is to fly.
Which is impossible. So goodbye".
"Sorry, Bemused. The road-diggers do
Worse than the rain.. I can't ask you
To come on foot and thus suffer
Just for a poor lousy supper".
"I would love to do it, but please excuse,
I've only one last pair of shoes".

Public Instruction

The Municipality had only a small stake in Dacca's education. Traditionally, education in India had been based on religion. Patshalas (privately managed institutions), the more formal tols (Sanskrit schools) and maktabs (Persian schools), were all basically religious foundations; training pupils to cope with life in this world was not their main aim. A certain amount of secular education had been encouraged by the Mughals, particularly the study of Arabic, logic, metaphysics and law, and later by the Christian missionaries; the first missionary school was founded in Dacca by a Baptist in 1817.[358] It was not until 1852 that a more integrated system of education was conceived in India and a central Education Department was established by Lord Dalhousie. A Director of Public Instruction was given overall responsibility for education in each province. On the recommendation of the Hunter Commission of 1883, responsibility for vernacular education was transferred to local bodies who, however, could not act independently, but were answerable to the provincial government.[359]

Although Dacca Municipality, at the instance of successive District Magistrates, had been giving grants-in-aid to various schools since 1882,[360] and despite its increasing financial involvement in the city's primary education, education in Dacca was largely outside the control of the civic body. In fact, only a few primary schools were actually run by it, the majority of schools in the city being aided and managed by wealthy individuals.

Since 1885 many municipalities in Bengal had taken up responsibility for primary education, as was required under the Act of 1884, but few, in practice, accorded it a high degree of priority.[361] The most pressing needs of cities were always physical -sanitation, water-supply, roads and so on; municipalities had limited resources and on the whole the abstract ideal of educating the masses seemed of secondary importance to them. Nevertheless, by the turn of the century, social reformers, some politicized middle class leaders and the government were becoming increasingly aware of the need for mass literacy. An educated electorate was a basic requirement for any elective system, however restricted the democracy might be. Evan Biss, a member of the Indian Educational Service, was deputed in 1919 to devise ways of extending primary education in urban areas by giving municipalities powers to make education compulsory for children of school going age (5 - 10).[362] As the government remarked in 1932, the Act provided useful opportunities for a 'municipality which has the necessary enthusiasm and zeal in the cause of education'.[363]

Unfortunately, a serious obstacle had to be overcome before such hopes could be realized. It was essential to the success of the scheme put forward by Biss that finance should be provided through the levy of a new education tax. Although the 1919 Act empowered them to raise the necessary funds, most Bengal municipalities hestitated to commit themselves to large scale expenditure and only Berhampore Municipality took advantage of the Act.[364] One problem was that the people of Bengal, as elsewhere, were unwilling to add to

their tax burden [365] and there was, furthermore, a general lack of appreciation among ratepayers and their elected representatives of the paramount importance of expanding education rapidly. Instead of taxes, the municipalities relied on fees from the pupils and grants from the government. These were insufficient to make the Primary Education Act fully effective. [366] Another difficulty was that municipalities often failed to direct their funds, meagre as they were, judiciously. The government did not itself give grants directly to any schools, but it was represented by the District Inspector, who had responsibility for inspecting the schools and advising local bodies as to how their grants should be allocated. However, he had no control over the policies of the civic bodies which did not always act on his recommendations, even giving grants against his advice on occasions. Finally, municipalities often spent less than the required 3.2 per cent of their ordinary income on education, while it was not uncommon for government educational grants to be diverted to non-educational purposes. [367] The great majority of municipalities, therefore, failed to fulfil the expectations of those who had promoted the 1919 Primary Education Act.

The great exception in Eastern Bengal was Chittagong, which introduced free and compulsory education for boys in 1931 - 32, [368] when Calcutta was the only other place in Bengal to boast of such an advanced policy. [369] By 1935, Chittagong Municipality was directly running 63 boys' and girls' primary schools and 'a well conducted High English

School', as well as providing financial aid to numerous private schools.[370] Chittagong took the next bold step in 1939 when it launched a scheme, which was highly praised by government, to make girls' primary education free and compulsory by 1940 - 1941.[371]

It is remarkable that Dacca, the only city and main educational centre of Eastern Bengal, failed to match Chittagong's achievements over primary education. Dacca Municipality took no advantage of the 1919 Act, neither making education compulsory, nor raising extra money through education cess. What little progress it did make - in education as in other municipal services- was almost entirely dependent on the personal preferences of individual chairmen. In 1920 - 1921, at the beginning of the period under review, Khwaja Yousuff had been the chairman. He was an enthusiast for sewerage and waterworks, but education was not his passion; the Municipality bore no direct responsibility for any schools. Nazimuddin, who succeeded Khwaja Yousuff, took a greater interest in education. Not only did he set up three boys' primary schools directly under municipal management, but he also drew up schemes for two more boys' schools and three girls' schools before leaving the Municipality in December 1929 to become Education Minister of Bengal.[372] His successors as chairman, Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das, in particular, regarded female education as the great priority. By 1935, Dacca Municipality was maintaining five boys' and eleven girls' schools.[373] The total of 16 maintained schools reflects some credit on the commissioners when one recalls that none was maintained fifteen years earlier: but it can hardly stand comparison with Chittagong's 63. Pyarilal's successors were not concerned with female education and no more girls' schools were taken under municipal management during the period under review. By 1941, the Municipality was managing seventeen boys' as well as the eleven girls' primary schools.[374]. The number of children of school age, between 5 - 10 years, constituted twelve per cent of the population of the Municipal area. That is to say, about 26,000 children required primary education. The

twenty-eight free primary schools run by the Municipality could cater for less than 3,000 children. [375]

The rest of the children had to depend on private schools, some of which enjoyed help from the Municipality. In 1941, the Municipality was giving monthly lump-sum grants to eleven boys primary schools on condition that they demanded no tuition fees from the pupils, while thirty boys' primary schools, ten primary maktabs and twenty five girls' primary schools, all under private management, were also given stipends by the Municipality. In addition, grants were given to various Sanskrit tols, madrassahs, the Deaf and Dumb School, the Orphanage Society and the Ananda Asram. [376]

All of these grants came out of a tiny education budget. At the beginning of the period, the Municipality relied heavily on government assistance, over half of its educational expenditure being made up of government grants; of the Rs 11,482 which the Municipality spent on public instruction in 1920 - 1921, the government contribution was Rs 6,438. [377] By 1930 - 1931, the government share had fallen to just under half - Rs 12,786 out of a total budget of Rs 26,402 [378] and by 1940 - 1941, the Municipality was even less dependent on government; the government subscribed only Rs 13,565 out of a total of Rs 43,716. [379]

There was, in the 1940s, widespread enthusiasm for mass education in Bengal, [380] and the provincial budget for 1945 - 1946 was severely criticized in the legislature on account of its neglect of education. The literacy rate was only twelve per cent in Bengal, although it was over forty per cent in Dacca city. [381] At the beginning of the century, the rate in Dacca had been twelve per cent, and slightly over ten per cent in the province as a whole. [382] There had therefore been marked progress in this field. The need for an educated electorate had become urgent in the light of the extensions of the franchise introduced in 1919 and 1935; one of the most important tasks of government was to promote the development of primary education. Unfortun-

ately, the provincial educational budget, though reasonably large, was more heavily weighted in favour of higher than primary education - although the latter deserved more serious attention if the general rate of literacy was to improve.[383]

Almost all the major advances in education were due to the efforts of private schools. Even within its limited scope, the Municipality was unable to provide pupils with a good standard of education. This feature, like so many others, was not unique to Dacca. The Sargent Report of 1944 revealed that municipal primary education all over India was in a poor state, as a result of the 'apathy and incompetence of local boards'.[384] The standard of teaching in municipal schools was generally admitted to be low, while the teachers were reputed to be unenthusiastic about their work.[385] The average pay of a municipal primary school teacher in Dacca was Rs. 31 per month. This was under half the salary of a Bullock-feed Inspector, who earned Rs. 65 per month, and was only slightly more than the Rs 28 per month enjoyed by a methor sardar.[386] Under the circumstances, dedication and a high standard of instruction could hardly be expected from the teachers. Moreover, the pupils, coming mainly from poor families, with no intention of continuing their studies, were unlikely to be inspired by the theoretical education imparted to them by frustrated and under-paid teachers.

It is clear from the above discussion that Dacca Municipality did make efforts to provide solutions to a number of vital urban problems and needs, from filtered water to free primary education. On the other hand, the city always needed more water than the Municipality could supply; more streets needed to be metalled and provided with electric lights; the persistent high infant mortality rate and the frequent cholera and smallpox epidemics belied the self-laudatory re-

ports of the Municipality with regard to its public health services and indicated an urgent need for improved sanitation in the city. Finally, the need to educate the electorate was pressing. Dacca Municipality, already overburdened with other services and perhaps secretly embarrassed at its inability to cope with public demand for them, seems an inappropriate body to have burdened with the responsibility for education. In the event, it was able to make primary education in the city neither free nor compulsory on any useful scale.

More than anything else, the lack of funds frustrated the provision of municipal services. Acute financial stringency of municipal administration has been a great impediment to the speedy solution of urban problems in India not only under British rule, but also in the post-independence era. The poverty, customs and habits of the people also stood in the way of the smooth development of civic amenities in Dacca. The case of the Ayurvedic Pharmacy Limited, regularly dumping 'excessive offensive matter' in busy Armenian Streets,[387] is an example which indicates that even doctors and pharmacists, who would be expected to work for the improvement of public health, did in fact act against it at times.

The way Dacca Municipality dealt with civic amenities can largely be explained by its budgetary constraints and also the politics of the groups who controlled the boards. The commissioners' activities were interrelated with the resources of the Municipality and their financial interests. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss municipal finance and politics at some length.

Notes and References

1. Contemporary sources on the administration of the Mughals mention the Kotwal and his enormous powers over Indian cities. Paramatma Saran and Bankey Bihari Misra mentioned among other sources: Abul Fazal, Akbarnama and Ain-i-Akbari; Muhammad Kasim, Mirat-i-Sikandari (A history of Gujrat); Ghulam Hussain Zaidpuri, Riaz-al-Salatin (A history of Bengal and Dastur-ul-Amal-i-Aurangzeb (A code of Auranzeb's Administrative Procedure).
   See P. Saran, The Provincial Government of the Mughals, 1526-1658 (Second edition, Bombay,1973), 158, 214 - 217, 332, 333;
   B.B. Misra, Administrative History of India, 1834 - 1947, (Bombay,1970), 591 - 592 (hereafter Administrative History);
   Hugh Tinker, The Foundations of Local Self Government in India, Pakistan and Burma (second Impression, London,1968), 17 - 18 (hereafter The Foundations).

2. Bradley-Birt, 244; Rudduck, 81.Dacca, however, was not unique in this respect in the subcontinent.

3. M. Dorothy George, London life in the Eighteenth Century (Third edition, London,1976), 67 - 68, 69; A.R. Myers, England in the late Middle Ages (Revised edition, London, 1969),67.
   Myers noted that the English towns in the middle ages 'would seem to us ill-paved, smelly, insanitary, and their people quick to succumb to frequent plagues'.

4. Tinker, The Foundations, 21.

5. S.U. Ahmed, 'Urban Problems and Government Policies: a case study of the City of Dacca, 1810 - 1830' in K. Ballhatchet and J. Harrison (eds), The City in South Asia Pre-Modern and Modern (London, 1980), 133 (hereafter South Asia).

6. Misra, Administrative History, 566; Tinker, The Foundations, 17, 25 - 26.

7. Tinker, The Foundations, 25 - 26.

8. Misra, Administrative History, 566 - 567.

9. Tinker, The Foundations, 26.

10. Misra, Administrative History, 570 - 571.

11. Quoted in Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities (Harmondsworth, Reprinted,1975), 20.

12. J.Harrison, 'Allahabad: A Sanitary History' in Ballhatchet and Harrison, South Asia, 170.

13. Tinker, The Foundations, 28 - 29.

14. For popular opposition to various Acts in the 1850 s see S.U. Ahmed, 'The History of the City of Dacca, C. 1840 - 1885'(University of London, Ph.D. thesis, 1978), 256 - 69 (hereafter 'The History').

15. These improvements took place as a result of improvements in technology. The availability of new forms of fuel like gas and kerosene at reasonable cost had a close connection with street lighting and similarly the water supply improved with the availability of effective steam machinery in India and the introduction of railways which helped to move the coal.

16. Tinker, The Foundations, 36 - 37. C.A. Bayly, The Local Roots of Indian Politics, Allahabad 1880 - 1920 (Oxford, 1975), 11 - 12. (hereafter The Local Roots). See also D. Banerjea, Provincial Finance in India (London, 1929). The government needed to find new revenue after the Mutiny and to make raising it palatable by giving local dignitaries some say in its collection and expenditure. All local governments in British India - urban or rural - always turned upon securing the help of men with influence who would help government - and who were paid for that help with honours, or power to reward their friends or annoy their enemies, with patronage and semi-licit perks.

17. Misra, Administrative History, 570 - 581; Tinker, The Foundations, 38.

18. Tinker, The Foundations, 47, 36 - 38.

19. Ibid., 48; Azimushan Haider, 'A Concise History of Dacca Municipality 1864 - 1964' in Azimusshan Haider (ed.) A City and its Civic Body (Dacca, 1966), 98 (hereafter A City).

20. H.T.S. Forrest, The Indian Municipality (Calcutta, 1909), 10.

21. The chairman served exofficio on all sub-committees and was in a good position to influence the working of all these bodies. He was responsible for drawing up agendas and the order of proceedings. He could speed up or delay the implementation of decisions. Very often matters were referred for the chairman's action - as in deciding whether to grant or withhold planning permission. The secretary or other office staff worked with and for him so that he was better informed than the commissioners. For details see Forrest, 10 - 13.

22. See Bengal Municipal Act, 111 of 1884, part II, secs. 38 and 41. The commissioners of the municipalities had many other duties which were mainly:

    1. The election of commissioners.
    2. The election of a chairman.
    3. The election of a vice-chairman.
    4. The holding of meetings.
    5. The framing of by-laws.
    6. The imposition of taxes and rates.
    7. The assessment of the rate-payers' holdings.
    8. The collection of taxes and rates from the ratepayers.
    9. The conduct of correspondence with the authorities and the public.

10. The maintenance of records.
11. The keeping of accounts of receipts and expenditure.
12. The conservancy of the town (public and private).
13. The construction and maintenance of roads and streets.
14. The lighting of roads and streets.
15. The maintenance of a drainage system.
16. The provision of filtered water and the control of private sources of water-supply.
17. The construction of bridges, drains and municipal buildings.
18. The maintenance of public markets.
19. The inspection of private markets and the food supply generally.
20. The registration of births and deaths.
21. The entire or partial maintenance of a town police force.
22. The advancement of education.
23. The maintenance of hospitals and dispensaries.
24. The taking of measures to deal with plague and other epidemics.
25. The maintenance of a staff of public vaccinators.
26. The prevention of fires and the maintenance of a fire brigade.
27. The regulation of the building of houses and huts.
28. The opening up of crowded and insanitary areas.
29. The maintenance of pounds and ferries.
30. The maintenance of public burial grounds and burning ghats.
31. The stocking and issuing of municipal stores.
32. The prosecution of offenders against the various Acts and by-laws.

See Forrest, 10 - 13, 36 - 37.

23. Tinker, The Foundations, 58.

24. For the rise of radical politics in India see David M. Laushey, Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left, Aspects of Regional Nationalism in India 1905 - 1942 (Calcutta, 1975), 2 - 138.

25. Tinker, The Foundations, 88 - 105.

26. For the involvement of local boards in national politics see Tinker, The Foundations, 145 - 161.
The system of administration under the Reforms of 1919 was called dyarchy as the provincial administration was divided into two categories known as 'reserved' and 'transferred'. The more general and important subjects were reserved, to be administered by the Governor with the help of a council. The subjects of local importance were transferred to the elected ministers.

For the slowing down of the administrative process as a result of the democratic system see Najmul Abedin, Local Administration and Politics in Modernizing Societies - Bangladesh and Pakistan (Dacca, 1973), 48 - 49. For a general discussion of the political use of the Indian

municipalities in the twentieth century see Tinker, The Foundations, 145 - 161; for specific municipalities see Bayly, The Local Roots, 157 - 176, 261 - 267 (for Allahabad); Rodney W. Jones, Urban Politics in India (Berkeley, 1974), 133 - 210, (for Indore); and F. Robinson, 'Municipal Government and Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces, 1883 to 1916' in J. Gallagher, G. Johnson and A. Seal (eds.), Locality, Province and Nation, Essays on Indian Politics 1870 to 1940 (Cambridge, 1973), 69 - 121 (hereafter The Essays); C.A. Bayly, 'Patrons and Politics in Northern India' in The Essays, 29 - 68; A.C. Mayer, 'Municipal Elections: A Central Indian Case Study' in C.H. Phillips (ed.) Studies on Modern Asia and Africa 1, Politics and Society in India, (London,1963), 115 - 132.

27. This Act was another step towards democratization of the municipalities. It also brought increased financial powers to them which will be discussed in the Chapter on municipal finance.

28. S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 319.

29. District Gazetteer, 1912, 179.

30. Q.M. Afsar Hossain Saqui and Roushan Ara Begum, Pourashava's Finance - A Case Study of Narayanganj Pourashava (Dacca, 1973), 2.

31. A visitor from Rotherham in 1808 was shocked by the squalor of Manchester. He not only found the 'town abominably filthy' but also 'the water of the river as black as ink or the Stygian lake'. See Briggs, 89.

Baron Dowleans described the filthiness of Calcutta's riverwater for which of course he blamed mainly the 'low class natives' who had no 'concept of cleanliness' and fouled not only their own sources of water supply but fouled the water in the European quarter as well, See Baron Dowleans, 'Calcutta in 1860', in Pradip Chaudhury and Abhijit Mukhapadhyay (eds), Calcutta: People and Empire (Calcutta, 1975), 18 - 19.

32. New India, vol. XXXVII (Calcutta, 1912), 157.

33. District Gazetteer, 1912, 179, 180, 182; S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 340 - 342. It seems, however, that the water of the Buriganga was regarded as particularly good by the traveller, Captain Bowrey, who visited Dacca in 1678 and recorded that river's water was 'extraordinary good'. Quoted in District Gazetteer, 1912, 173.

The water probably deteriorated during the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. Khwaja Abdul Ghani, the Nawab of Dacca, offered Rs 50,000 to the government 'for the permanent benefit of the city of Dacca'. It was professedly both an acknowledgement of the honour of K.C.S.I. conferred upon him by the government and an 'expression of his gratitude to Providence for the recovery of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales from a dreadful malady'. According to Haider, a committee, appointed

to find out the best possible way of using this generous gift, decided that 'the supply of pure drinking water' was the most suitable of a number of possible charitable projects discussed. 'The estimated cost, however, was found to far exceed the gift. The Nawab at once removed the difficulty by doubling his offer and raising it to a lac of rupees, subject to the condition that the water should be supplied to the citizens free of all charge'. See Haider in A City, 109.

This was the promise of the Nawab to the public. But it was not entirely in his gift in the sense that although his son, Nawab Ahsanullah Bahadur, 'invested Rs 50,000 to meet a portion of its maintenance charge' the government had also to pay over Rs. 90,000 for the construction of the water-works which started in 1874 but opened in 1878. The responsibility for construction was given to the Public Works Department of the Government of Bengal. Haider in A City, 110; S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 342.

34. The most obvious and cheapest installation to an engineer was to run straight lengths of pipe along wide, accessible roads where there could be difficulties from the engineer's as well as individual householders' points of view.

35. Haider in A City, 110.

36. Ibid.

37. See Tinker, The Foundations, 43 - 63. Numerous committees, sub-committees and discussions slowed down the pace of work. It was in addition harder for a non-official chairman to press the official levers to accelerate the administrative processes.

38. District Gazetteer, 1912, 180.

38A. Annual Administration Report of the Municipality of Dacca, 1899 - 1900, 9 - 11; (hereafter AARDM); AARDM, 1900 - 01, 2.

39. See the population table of Dacca city on p. 26.

39A. District Gazetteer, 1912, 180.

The water-works, which was formally handed over to the Municipality in 1880 by the Public Works Department, had two immersion boilers and two engines connected with four settling tanks and two filtering beds with one reservoir for filtered water. 'The water was drawn from the Buriganga, passed through settling tanks and filtering beds, and distributed through 4¼ miles of pipes fitted with 25 street stand posts. The daily supply of filtered water available was 200,000 gallons. This supply was far from meeting the requirements of the city'. Several extensions were made with the help of the Nawab, the Municipality and the government. By 1893 over 16 miles of mains were laid and a new and improved scheme was started in 1908 on a bigger scale than before. See District Gazetteer, 1912, 180; Jatindra Mohan Roy, Dhakar Itihasa

(History of Dacca), Part 1 (Calcutta, 1913) 285 - 286; AARDM. 1899 - 1900, 9 - 11; 1909 - 1910, 11 - 12. The District Gazetteer, 1912 and the Administration Report of the Municipality 1909 - 10 do not tally on the number of Jewel filters. The Municipality recorded the number as five, whereas the District Gazetteer recorded it as six. See District Gazetteer, 1912, 180 and AARDM. 1909 - 10, 12.

40. The figure of 1878 comes from the District Gazetteer 1912, 180; of 1893 from Haider in A City, 110; for the rest of the figures see AARDM., 1909 - 10, 12; 1918 - 19, 23; 1920 - 21, 11; 1926 - 27, 12; 1930 - 31, 8; 1939 - 40, 7 and 1940 - 41, 6.
The figure 306 for 1920 - 21 is uncertain because instead of street hydrants, the phrase 'street watering hydrants' was used which may have had a different meaning. No figure specifically for street hydrants was mentioned in the Administration Report for the years 1920 - 21. Just to water the streets 306 hydrants seems to be an improbable number. These are, therefore more likely to be street hydrants.
1878 and 1893 were given as single years in the sources consulted.

41. See Tinker, The Foundations, 96, 103, 104.

42. A violent cyclone aggravated the situation. AARDM., 1918 - 19, 1.

42A. Tinker, The Foundations, 109 - 110.

42B. W. W. Hornell's (The Director of Public Instruction Bengal) 'Dacca University Note, No.4', Education Department, Bengal, Notes 1 - 10, part 1, page 11. See also Dacca Municipality Proceedings, 6 July 1922 (hereafter DMP.).

43. Only the miles have been mentioned in the table. District Gazetteer, 1912, 179; AARDM., 1909 - 10, 11 - 12; 1920 - 21, 11; 1926 - 27, 12, 1930 - 31, 8 and 1940 - 41, 6.
Haider says that 16 miles of water pipe-line existed in the city by 1893 and 37 miles 1,470 ft in 1915 - 16. See Haider in A City, 110 and 112.

The exact figures recorded for 1919 - 20 and 1920 - 21 were 38 miles 4665 ft and 39 miles 1309 ft respectively.

In 1925 - 26, the figures were 45 miles 1,470 ft in Haider in A City, 112.

The recorded figures for 1925 - 26 and 1926 - 27 were 45 miles 1688½ ft and 47 miles 1630½ ft. The mileage in 1929 - 30 was 47 miles 6364 ft. See AARDM., 1930 - 31,

8. This shows a growth of only a few hundred feet between 1926 - 27 and 1929 - 30. In 1940 - 41 the figure was over 51 miles, but no exact figure has been mentioned.

It was much cheaper to instal water hydrants in the streets than to lay water pipes. The Municipality tried to compensate for the lack of adequate water piping by increasing the number of water hydrants in the streets. Thus for example, the length of water piping virtually stood still during the decade 1931 - 1941, whereas the number of water hydrants increased by 344. See the table on the number of street hydrants, p. 70.

44. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 23; 1920 - 21, 11. In 1920 two new overhead storage tanks were built to improve the water supply of the city. One was built in Victoria Park in the vicinity of Bangla Bazar and Tanti Bazar - the two crowded residential and business areas in the city.

44A. AARDM, 1921 - 22, 11.

45. AARDM, 1930 - 31, 8 and 19.

46. Ibid, 19.

47. See AARDM, 1909 - 10, 11; 1920 - 21, 11. The actual population mentioned in the Census report was 119,450. The Municipality recorded the per capita supply as over ten gallons per day. See AARDM, 1920 - 21, 11.

The Dacca water-works during our period served an approximate area of 6.77 sq. miles. Although Howrah served about 10.10 sq. miles and more people (about 1195,301 in 1925) and supplied more water daily per head (about 17.12 gallons), its water-works was a slow sand-filter system - less modern than Dacca's Jewel Gravity filter system' - See Bengal Public Health Report, 1925, Appendix 1, 84 (hereafter, BPHR).

AARDM, 1926 - 27, 13. According to the municipal report of 1926 - 27 the average per capita supply per day was 13.3 gallons which seems unlikely. If 1,553,210 gallons were supplied at 13.3 gallons per person, then the population of the city would be 116,783 meaning that the population in Dacca city in 1926 - 27 was less than in 1920 - 21.

In 1930 - 31 the Census recorded 138,518 people in the city. But again the equation between the Census population and the gallons of water supplied by the Municipality per head produces a different population figure for the city. At 13.7 gallons per head, 1878,58 gallons of water could be supplied to 137,136 people - not to 138,518 people as the census recorded. See AARDM, 1930 - 31, 8.

The figures for 1940 - 41 are not available and figures for 1946 - 47 come from Haider in A City, 112. He gave

Dacca's population in 1947 as 258,038. In the table the figure has been rounded to the nearest thousand. But whether rounded or not the figure for per capita supply does not logically come from the total water supply figure. All these figures should, therefore, be treated with caution.

48. AARDM, 1930 - 31, 19.

49. Ibid, 1940 - 41, 7.

50. Ibid; See also AARDM, 1939 - 40, 7.

To ensure a regular supply of water during the war, the water-works was declared a protected area and special precautions were taken, involving the introduction of regulations restricting admission to the water-works compound. Special protective measures were also taken 'to safeguard against any act of sabotage in the Head works'.

51. See water pipe extension in Khasmahal lands at Purana Paltan, 1923 - 24, Scheme for the Fourth Improvement of the Water-Works, 1936 - 37, Collection XXXI (hereafter Water-Works Improvement, 1936 - 37); Improvement of Purana Paltan, 1938 - 47, Collection XXV, File 2.

52. BRHR. 1936, 6 - 11; Annual Report of the Sanitary Board Bengal, 1935, 2 (hereafter BSBR.); see also Water-Works Improvement, 1936 - 37.

53. AARDM, 1939 - 40, 7.

54. Ibid., 1940 - 41, 6 - 7.

55. Ibid., 1918 - 19, 23. See also the criticims against Dacca Municipality's inefficiency in providing the city with adequate amenities in Dhaka Prokash, 27 January 1923, 3.

56. Proceedings of a Deputation of the Dacca Rate Payers' Association, 12 July, 1923 (hereafter Ratepyaers' Deputation).

57. Tinker, The Foundations, 288.

58. Ibid, 291.

59. AARDM, 1920 - 21, 12; 1928 - 29, 22.

60. Ibid., 1940 - 41, 6.

The pressure of water depended among other things on the diameter of the water pipes laid under ground. Pipes with bigger diameters were obviously more expensive than those with smaller. In 1926 - 27 the diameters of pipes used in the city ranged from 1½" to 13". See AARDM, 1926 - 27, 12.

In 1940 - 41 a few hundred feet of water main were laid near the Government Distillery. It was an 'undeveloped' part of Gandaria. The diameter of this pipe was 3". If a pipe is only 3" wide and a number of hydrants are connected with it, the pressure is bound to be low. See AARDM, 1940 - 41, 6.

The subsidiary main of 2498 feet which was laid in 1920 - 21 to improve the water pressure in Wari had a diameter of 5". See AARDM, 1920 - 21, 11.

61. BPHR, 1936, 10 . See also DMP, 18 June 1941.

62. AARDM, 1940 - 41, 6 - 7 and 15.

63. Ibid., 1940 - 41, 7.

64. See the chapter on municipal finance, p. 243.

65. See the city map 1912 - 15, Land Revenue Office, Dacca.

66. Dhaka Prokash, 27 January 1923, 3.

67. See the Sanitary Inspection Report on Dacca Municipality by Dr. S.N. Sur, 1938, 6. (hereafter SIRD).

68. East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 457.

69. BSBR, 1941, 1; See also the Water-Works Improvement, 1936 - 37.

70. The Bangladesh Observer, Dacca, 4 July 1977, 1.

71. The northern part of the city was open and spacious enough to accommodate newer developments like the power house which needed a large site.

72. Haider in A City, 114.

73. Ibid., 113 . See also S.U.Ahmed, 'The History', 353 - 354.

74. Ibid., 354.

75. Ibid. . See also Haider in A City, 113.

76. Haider in A City, 113.

77. S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 354.

78. The Englishman, 4 March 1887, quoted in Haider in A City, 113.

79. Haider in A City, 114.

80. Bengal Administration Report, 1927 - 28, 116. (hereafter BAR).

81. AARDM, 1909 - 10, 10.

82. Ibid., 1920 - 21, 10.

83. DMP., 30 March 1921.

84. AARDM, 1926 - 27, 12.

85. Ibid., 1929 - 30 (MSS.; irregular pagination)

86. BAR., April 1935, 209. See also Haider in A City, 114.

87. AARDM., 1939 - 40. 6. See also Ibid., 1929 - 30, (MSS).

88. For 1878 and 1887, figures, see S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 354. See Haider in A City, 113, for 1900 figures. For the rest, except 1934 - 35 and 1946 - 47, see AARDM., 1909 - 10, 10; 1920 - 21, 10; 1926 - 27, 12; 1930 - 31, 7; 1939 - 40, 6; 1949 - 41, 5.

For 1934 - 35 figure see BAR., 1935, 209 and for 1946 - 47 see Haider in A City, 114. Haider mentions that the figures for 1946 - 47 were for the municipal area only. Figures of electric lights for 1908 - 19 and 1909 - 10 are not available in the sources consulted. The figure for 1909 was calculated on the basis of the 1920 - 21 figure recorded in AARDM, 1920 - 21 which was 2½ times bigger than 1901's number.

89. DMP., 18 June 1941.

90. Ibid.

P.K. Dey and Das Brothers were well known contractors for street lighting in Dacca. No Muslim entered into competition with them before Partition.

Interview with Ahmad Ullah (Owner of a Press) in Dacca, 20 January, 1977.

Interview with K.C. Roy (Goldsmith) in Dacca, 19 February, 1977.

91. See AARDM, 1940 - 41, 15.

See also the District Magistrate's Report to the Divisional Commissioner, Dacca 19 July, 1947 (hereafter, The District Magistrate's Report, 1947).

92. AARDM., 1943 - 44, mentioned in Haider in A City, 114.

93. See AARDM, 1940 - 41, 6; The District Magistrate's Report, 1947. See also the expenditure on principal items in the chapter on municipal finance, p. 243.

94. Maps 8A and 8B, pp. 90A, 90B show the electric light posts quite clearly. Only the Civil Station, for which the Municipality was not responsible, was properly lit. See also

W.W. Hornell, Director of Public Instruction, Education Department, Bengal: Dacca University Notes, No. 7, p. 17.

95. See Budha Dev Basu, Amar Chelebela (My childhood) (Calcutta, 1973), 110.

96. Calculated on the basis of the figures under population and occupation in the Census reports. See Census of India, 1931, vol. V, part ii, 135; there were 1096 police men in Dacca city for a population of 138,518. See Census of India, 1931, vol. v, part ii, 10. As the large number of policemen indicates a high crime rate in the city, more electric light should ideally have been installed in the crowded part of the old town, with its numerous alleys, rather than around the open race course, for example, where there were no races at night in any case and criminals had little opportunity or incentive to commit any crimes.

97. For a discussion of the problems of local government in East and West see Tinker, The Foundations, 1 - 12.

97A. 'The City of Calcutta and its municipal constitution' in Pradip Chaudhury and Abhijit Mukhapadhyay (eds.) Calcutta: People and Empire, (Calcutta, 1975), 54. (hereafter Calcutta: People and Empire).

(This article was written in 1880. The author's name was not mentioned).

98. Quoted in Ibid., 56.

99. Ibid., 58.

100. Quoted in District Gazetteer, 1912, 78.

101. Quoted in 'The City of Calcutta and its Municipal Constitution' in Calcutta: People and Empire, 55. This report was first published in Calcutta Review, vol. v, 1846, 385.

102. See Tinker, The Foundations, 36.

103. For a fuller discussion see S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 331 - 334.

104. Ibid., 336.

Although according to S.U. Ahmed well privies were closed in the late nineteenth century, Geddes said he had been presented with a list of 1,715 well-privies in Dacca in 1916. See Geddes, 20. The force of tradition and rurality combined with financial situation of the people slow down the pace of modernization significantly in any old city.

105. District Gazetteer, 1912, 79 - 80.

The city still had 12 public latrines in 1905 as in 1885. See District Gazetteer, 1912, 79.

106. Well-privies were literally 'well' - privies. They were dug into the earth in the shape of wells on top of which a structure was made so that the users could squat reasonably comfortably. To ensure privacy, the structure was surrounded by corrugated iron, wood, bamboo or reeds according to the means of the people. These wells were used till they became completely full and then were abandoned and covered with earth and new ones were constructed. Gumla privies were an improvement on well-privies as they could be cleansed regularly by cleansing the gumla and therefore saved the owners space and worries if not money.

107. Quoted in Haider in A City, 115.

108. Ibid., 116.

109. Interview with Mohammad Rostam Miah Sardar in Dacca, 30 January, 1977.

Interview with K.C. Roy, Dacca 19 February 1977. Even in the present time methors come very early in the morning and once a week to most of the houses with gumla privies in Dacca. Early hours suit both men and women, as men can avoid paying the methors bakhshish (tips) which they demand whenever an opportunity arises (whenever met) and women can also keep their purdah intact.

110. Municipal records of Dacca did not infact define dumping. From personal experience of the city I can identify dumping with burying as well as merely depositing the stuff in low lying areas or in large holes which Geddes appropriately referred to as 'dump-holes'. See Geddes, 20.

111. There were as many as 36 dumping depots in the city in 1921, when the underground sewerage system was already partially built. Some of these were in Goalnagar, Prasanna, Poddar Lane, Naba Kumar Roy Lane, Rajendra Banerjee Street and Pratap Chandra Das Lane. See Bengal Municipal Proceedings, 13, 1921, 1, 2 and 8. (hereafter BMP.).

112. Quoted in the District Gazetteer, 1912, 79 - 80.

113. AARDM, 1909 - 10, 14.

114. Ibid.

115. AARDM, 1910 - 11, 18 - 19.

116. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 20.

117. Haider in A City, 117.

118. Nawabzada Khwaja Ahsanullah to Governor of East Pakistan, 28 April 1960, mentioned in Mohammad Kasimuddin Molla, Nawab Khwaja Salimulah: 1871 - 1915 (Rajshahi, 1970), 70 - 71.

119. District Gazetteer, 1912, 182.

120. For Nawab Khwaja Yousuff Khan Bahadur's life sketch see S.M. Taifoor, 'Nawab Khwaja Yousuf Jan' in Haider, A City, 80 - 82; Interview with Begum Tahera Kabir, daughter of Khwaja Shahabuddin Dacca, 28 September 1976.

121. District Gazetteer, 1912, 79.

122. AARDM., 1918 - 19, 22; DMP., 13 May,1920, 8.

123. AARDM., 1918 - 19, 26.

124. Ibid., 33.

125. AARDM., 1920 - 21, 17.

126. Francis Sheppard, London 1808 - 1870: The Infernal Wen (London, 1971), 252.

127. Ibid.

128. K.L. Gillion, Ahmedabad - A Study in Indian Urban History (Berkeley, 1968), 108; Harrison, 'A Sanitary History' in South Asia, 176 - 177, 181.

The caste Hindus in general however believe that they do not have any dirty habits. It is only the 'Harijans' and Muslims who are dirty. See V.S. Naipaul, India : A Wounded Civilization (London, 1977), 156.

129. Titagarh, Bhatpara and Kurseong were the only other mofussil municipalities to modernize their conservancy system at about this time.

See BAR., 1925 - 26, 42.

130. AARDM., 1920 - 21, 17.

Progress in the sewerage system was also delayed from time to time, like many other services, because of the time it took to acquire lands. In 1925 the Public Health Department of Bengal acquired some land for outfall work for the extension of Dacca's sewerage system. It took a long time to complete the project.

See BPHR., 1925, 79.

131. AARDM., 1921 - 22, 9.

132. Geddes, 20.

133. Ibid., 19 - 21.

The underground sewerage project in Geddes' view was the maximum generosity that Dacca Municipality could hope for from an exchequer crippled by the First World War.

134. AARDM., 1921 - 22, 9; See also Haider in A City, 117; Dumping depots were in Miranjalla, Gandaria, Bangla Bazar, later in Ramna, Nilkhet and Mirpur also.

135. AARDM., 1930 - 31, 11.

The small number of public latrines was a reflection of popular attitudes towards this foreign concept which probably was culturally objectionable.

136. AARDM., 1930 - 31, 11.

137. Gumla privies always needed methors whether they were actually serviced or not. Because of the absence of methor passages, many of the privies were inaccessible and therefore not serviceable. But the Municipality brought about a change in the situation by trying to impress on the ratepayers that adequate access should be provided to the methors. This was done in a large number of cases during 1921 - 31.

138. SIRD (by Dr. B.C. Mukherjee), 1932 - 33, 13.

139. SIRD. (by Dr. S.N. Sur), 1937, 6 - 7.

140. Ibid., AARDM., 1940 - 41, 7 - 8.

Interview with Mohammad Rostam Miah Sardar in Dacca, 30 January, 1977; Interview with Mr and Mrs Hafizuddin Ahmed in Dacca 15 January, 1977; Narayan Chandra Saha Dacca, 8 February, 1977.

These interviews were useful in understanding the rigidity of 'purdah' observed in those days as well as the social habits of the people. Many people pretended that latrines did not exist in their lives and regarded discussing these as bad taste.

141. AARDM., 1939 - 40, 8; Ibid., 1940 - 41, 7 - 8.

142. AARDM., 1940 - 41, 8.

143. Ibid., 15.

144. BAR., 1926 - 27, 32; BAR., 1928 - 29, 51; BAR., 1930 - 31, 50; BAR., 1935 - 36, 92.

145. Ratepayers' Deputation, 20 July, 1923.

146. Dhaka Prokash, 16 March, 1923, 3.

A resident of Banianagar complained about the appalling conditions of latrines and drains in their areas due to the negligence of the sweepers. See Dhaka Prokash, 25 April, 1926, 3; See also Abuz zoha Nur Ahmad, Unis Sataker Dhakar Samaj Jiban (Social Life in 19th century Dacca) (Dacca,1975), 47.

Nur Ahmad came from Chittagong to Dacca in 1925 as a student and was appalled by the dirtiness of Dacca and the foulness of municipal latrines in particular.

147. BAR., 1928 - 29, 51.

In 1926 - 27 BAR. mentioned that due to lack of funds, drainage, public health and public works suffered in Bengal municipalities. 'Peter was robbed to pay Paul, and increased expenditure in one direction has only too often been met by a curtailment in another'. BAR., 1926 - 27, 32.

Municipalities often met part of the conservancy cost of general rates and at times 'pocketing latrine revenues for general purpose'.

See BAR., 1930 - 31, 50.

The Bengal Government echoed the complaint later. See BAR., 1935 - 36, 9.

148. AARDM., 1940 - 41, 2.

The District Magistrate's Report, 1947.

149. The term 'sweepers' is often used in official records in a loose sense, meaning not only the methors or cleaners of the privies, but also the cleaners of the roads, drains and dumping depots.

150. AARDM., 1921 - 22, 12 - 13; Haider in A City, 117; SIRD., 1927, 6 - 8; AARDM., 1929 - 30, 8 - 9 and 20; AARDM., 1939 - 40, 8; For a brief history of the sweepers of Dacca, see also Satyen Sen, Saharer Itikatha, 116 - 124.

151. DMP., 23 October, 1944, 2; see also Satyen Sen, 119.

152. SIRD., 1932 - 33, 13; For population figure see Census of India, 1921, vol. V., part ii, 458.

153. Dacca city

Year	Population	No. of privy methors	No of people per methor
1921	117,900	188	627
1931	138,518	232	597
1941	213,218	283	753

The number of people per methor is only an approximation,

based on the assumption that the city did not change the customs of the people overnight. Sanitary latrines might have resulted in less frequent visits by the methors to the houses equipped with such modern privies, nevertheless this modernity did not make the sweeper's services redundant even after Partition. For cleansing even the sanitary latrines people had to call in the sweepers. The domestic servants used to look down upon any service connected with latrines. Even now in India sweepers are regarded as 'the lowest of the low: their very existence, and their acceptance of their function' reinforcing the Indian conviction that 'it was unclean to clean'. See V.S. Naipaul, 67.

Sources for population figures:

Census of India, 1921, vol. V, part ii, 458; 1931, vol. V., part ii, 4, 1941, vol. IV, 18, sources for methors: SIRD, 1932 - 33, 13; The Budget Estimates of Dacca Municipality, 1941 - 42, 34 (hereafter BEDM).

154. See the chairman's comment in AARDM, 1930 - 31, 10.

The scarcity of sweepers persisted at all times. During the War of 1939 - 45, however, it became more acute because they were lured away by the better pay offered by the armed forces in the Cantonment area of Dacca and some of them went to the mofussil towns where, because of their even more acute scarcity, the salaries offered were higher. See Satyen Sen, 122.

155. SIRD, 1927, 6 - 7.

156. Ibid, 7 - 8.

157. Ibid, 7.

158. For a general discussion of these problems in India see Forrest, 146. Interviews with Mohammed Rostam Miah Sardar in Dacca and Lakhsmi, Methrani (Sweepress) of Dacca Municipality, 20 December 1976, made it clear that Dacca sweepers conformed to the general image and behaviour pattern that Forrest has so vividly sketched.

159. BAR, 1925 - 26, 42.

160. Ibid,

161. SIRD, 1927, 8; 1933, 15.

162. BAR, 1928 - 29, 54; AARDM, 1929 - 30.

163. AARDM, 1929 - 30, 12.

164. Ibid; SIRD, 1933, 15.

165. AARDM, 1929 - 30, 12;

The District Magistrate's Report, 1939; See also the letter from the Bengal Government to the Harijan Sevak Sangh, 1 April 1940, Dept. of Public Health and Local Self-Government.

166. The methors' strikes were more frequent during the tenure of the new Health Officer. When Dr. Pratap Chandra Sen was the Health Officer of the Municipality, the sweepers threatened only once, in 1929, to go on strike. But the threat was successfully averted largely through the personal influence of Sen. The then chairman, Khwaja Nazimuddin, blamed the Communists of Dacca who he thought were instigating the sweepers to strike. See AARDM, 1928 - 29, 3.

Under the new Health Officer, the sweepers went on strike in 1943 and later in 1945. On the first occasion, the District Magistrate had to intervene and promise them better living and working conditions before they called off their strike. See Dhaka Prokash, 21 March, 1943, 2, see also DMP, 24 April, 1943, 4. On the advice of the District Magistrate, the municipal commissioners resolved to allow the strikers wages during their strike, with a warning only, in view of the fact that 'these illiterate people' were misled by 'outside influence'.

167. DMP, 23 October 1944, 2.

168. Ibid.

169. See S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 334 .

170. DMP, 23 October 1944, 2.

171. Ibid., 3 - 7.

172. Ibid., 2.

173. DMP, 23 January 1945, 1.

174. DMP, 15 May 1945, 1.

The methors went on a partial strike in March 1945 because of their quarrel with some local Muslims - the Kuttis. Although it was a private matter, the services of the Municipality were affected by it. The quarrel was, however, settled by the intervention of Moti Mia who was a Kutti himself and the Sardar of Kazi Alauddin Road Mahalla. At the time he was also a municipal commissioner. The methors, who had left their quarters in the Mahalla and started to live near Wari, came back to their previous quarters when assured of security against the Muslims in future. See DMP, 27 March 1945,1.

See also Satyen Sen, 122 - 124. Sen discusses how a few starving Bengali Muslims from the Relief Camps in Dacca were persuaded by the Conservancy Inspector, Abdul Aleem, to take up methor's profession during the famine of 1943.

175. AARDM, 1929 - 30, 12.

176. Ibid.

177. Ibid.

178. Lady Hartog, Living India (London, 1935), 37.

179. District Gazetteer, 1912, 71; East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 1969, 259.

180. Census of India, 1921, vol. V., part i, 108.

181. AARDM, 1919 - 20, 4; 1921 - 22, 14; 1926 - 27, 25; 1930 - 31, 14 and 1940 - 41, 9.

The births, deaths and increase in the number of births over deaths in 1920 were 3,548; 3,363 and 185 respectively. In 1927 the corresponding figures were 3,581, 3,221 and 360.

182. District Gazetteer, 1912, 72; East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 1969, 259.

183. Jatindra Mohan Roy, 285 - 286.

184. District Gazetteer, 1912, 73.

185. Sheppard, 247 - 248.

186. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 7.

187. Quoted in Sheppard, 270.

188. Lady Hartog, 152.

189. Tinker, The Foundations, 280.

190. District Gazetteer, 1912, 74.

191. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 8.

192. Ibid, 1920 - 21, 14; 1926 - 27, 19; 1927 - 28, 4 - 5.

120 people were recorded to have died from cholera in 1920 - 21.

193. AARDM, 1927 - 28, 4.

194. Ibid.

195. AARDM, 1930 - 31, 11.

196. Ibid, 1939 - 40, 9; 1940 - 41, 9.

197. Most of the deaths recorded in the Civil Lines and

hospital together must have occurred in the hospital. But a few deaths might have occurred among the native servants of the European community.

198. AARDM., 1920 - 21, 13.

199. BPHR., 1941, 214.

200. Ibid., 114. See also BPHR., 1920, 26 - 27. Public Health propaganda campaign was part of the Bengal Public Health Department's function and of the municipalities' throughout our period. See also AARDM., 1940 - 41, 10.

201. For a detailed discussion see AARDM., 1918 - 19, 8 - 9.

202. Ibid., AARDM., 1926 - 27, 25. See also Lady Hartog, 150. The existence of unserviceable privies and foul wells in the city was still a major source of epidemics. Owing to its financial problems, the structural defects of many privies and the opposition of the ratepayers to municipal requisitions of defective privies, the Municipality could not open a 'sufficient number of methor passages to remove the danger. See AARDM., 1929 - 30, (MSS); AARDM., 1940 - 41, 7 - 8.

203. AARDM., 1926 - 27, 25.

204. Ibid., 25 - 26.
Dysentery and diarrhoea had always been very widespread in Calcutta and Howrah and consequently the deaths from them also were far more in Calcutta and Howrah city than anywhere else in Bengal. See BPHR., 1926, 58.

205. AARDM., 1926 - 27, 25 - 26.

206. Ibid., 26.

207. Ibid., 27.
The chairman of the Municipality recorded his concern earlier in 1924 - 25 also over the death toll from dysentery and diarrhoea in the city. See AARDM., 1924 - 25,23.

208. AARDM., 1929 - 30, (MSS).

209. Ibid., 1920 - 21, 13.

210. AARDM., 1926 - 27, 23.

211. AARDM., 1930 - 31, 15; BSBR., 1935; AARDM., 1939 - 40, 10; 1940 - 41, 9.

212. AARDM., 1929 - 30, (MSS); 1940 - 41, 9.

213. AARDM., 1924 - 25, 23.

214. Bengal Act VI of 1919 (Food Adulteration Act), chapter 1; relevant sections: 3, 8, 10, 13, 16, 18 and 21.

215. AARDM, 1920 - 21, 8; 1929 - 30 (MSS).

216. Fractions have been omitted from the percentages; AARDM, 1926 - 27, 15. The actual percentage mentioned was 37.6. The corresponding percentage in 1925 - 26 was recorded to be as high as 52; AARDM, 1930 - 31, 14; BAR, 1932 - 33, 122; BAR, 1935 - 36, 149; AARDM, 1940 - 41, 13. Sources differ in recording the percentages of food adulteration in Dacca. For example Dacca Municipality recorded the percentages in 1930 - 31, as 50 whereas Bengal Public Health Report, 1931 recorded it as 30. See BPHR, 1931, 116. All the statistics, therefore, should be treated with caution.

217. There was a large number of commissioners who belonged to the trading and mercantile class in Dacca. Besides, the ratepayers who were engaged in whole sale and retail trading in food stuffs must have had contacts among the commissioners. For the commissioners' occupations see the chapter on municipal politics, p. 271.

218. Interview with Mohammad Rostam Miah Sardar in Dacca 30 Jan. 1977; Interview with Kshirode Lal Roy, 14 Jan. 1977.

219. AARDM, 1926 - 27, 15; 1930 - 31, 13 - 13; 1940 - 41, 13; BAR 1934 - 35, 92.

220. AARDM, 1926 - 27, 15 - 16; 1930 - 31, 14; 1940 - 41, 13.

221. See DMP, 5 June 1923; The chairman's report on illicit slaughter of animals in AARDM, 1926 - 27, 17; District Magistrate's Report, 1947, AARDM, 1949 - 50, 17.

222. See Annual Administration Report of Dacca University, 1946 - 47, 12 (hereafter DUAR).

223. Dhaka Prokash, 46, 1926, 3.

224. Ibid.

225. See the chapter on politics. See also Nazir Hussain, Kingbadantir Dhaka (Dacca, 1976), 39 - 40. The rich Basaks of Nawabpur (Madan Mohan Basak's family in particular) owned a whole market. This was called Rai Saheber Bazar.

226. BAR, 1932 - 33, 72 - 73.

227. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 9. For a history of small pox and its vaccination see Frederick F. Cartwright and Michael D. Biddiss, Disease and History (London, 1972), 116 - 131.

228. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 10.

229. Ibid.

230. Ibid.

231. Ibid., 11 - 12.

232. Ibid, 12. Interview with K.C. Roy in Dacca, 19 February 1977. See also Lady Hartog, 153.

233. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 12.

234. Ibid.

235. AARDM, 1920 - 21, 13 - 14. From early 1919 onwards some districts of India, under Gandhi's influence, tried to reject the West. Some went as far as rejecting vaccination as 'western abuse of mother cow' and launched anti-vaccinatio campaigns. See Tinker, The Foundations, 289. Though no such campaign was recorded to have been carried out in Dacca, the Gandhian cry of returning to indigenous culture (Swadeshi) might have had some effect on the orthodox Hindu citizens and the Hindu vaccinators in Dacca also. Nevertheless the shock of the epidemic of 1919 probably made Dacca people more willing to be vaccinated against the disease.

236. AARDM, 1927 - 28, 20.
For the figures of 1926 - 27, see AARDM, 1926 - 27, 14.

237. AARDM, 1927 - 28, 20.

238. Ibid., 21; Nearly 14000 people were recorded to have been vaccinated in 1927 - 28, which meant that only 'one-sixth of the population is protected'.
For the figures of 1928 - 29 see BAR. 1928 - 29, 52.

239. AARDM, 1929 - 30, (MSS.).

240. AARDM, 1930 - 31, 10.

241. Ibid.

242. Ibid., 11

243. See Banga Noor, Dacca 10 March, 1927, 6. This local weekly expressed its own and public doubt about the freshness of the serum used by the municipal vaccinators. Their doubts were caused by the outbreak of small pox among a number of people in Goalnagar and the adjacent areas who had already been vaccinated.

244. BPHR, 1935, 110.

245. Ibid., 103, 110 - 112.

246. AARDM, 1940 - 41, 10. The Municipality mentioned the

epidemic of 1935 - 36 and was apprehensive of another epidemic in the near future.

247. BPHR., 1935, 103.

248. AARDM., 1940 - 41, 10.

249. Ibid.

250. Ibid. See also BEDM., 1941 - 42, 46 - 47. The Municipality however appointed female vaccinators and extra vaccinators on a temporary basis depending on the severity of any outbreaks of cholera and small pox. Two female vaccinators were appointed in 1926 and their number continued to be the same till the end of our period. But three temporary female and one male vaccinators were appointed in 1927. See BEDM. 1927 - 28, 21.

In 1941 five temporary male vaccinators were appointed. See BEDM. 1941 - 42, 46. There was a vaccinating Inspector also from the beginning of our period, who was entrusted with the supervision of vaccination.

There was one medical officer in the twenties. By 1940, another had been appointed. The Health Officer was in overall charge of this department throughout our period.

251. Buchanan Hamilton, quoted in East Pakistan District Gazetteer, 262.

252. AARDM., 1918 - 19, 13.

253. Ibid., 14.

254. Ibid. The medical officers (one in the twenties and thirties and two in the forties) of the Municipality were in charge of checking the registration of births and deaths. See BEDM., 1927 - 28, 21; 1941 - 42, 46.

255. AARDM., 1918 - 19, 14.

256. Ibid., 1926 - 27, 18; 1929 - 30, (MSS); 1940-41, 10.

257. AARDM., 1926 - 27, 18.

258. For the figures see AARDM., 1929 - 30, (MSS); 1939-40, 11; 1940 - 41, 11.

259. Lady Hartog, 151.

260. BAR., 1925 - 26, /XV.

261. Burdwan and Nadia were by far the worst districts in Bengal, where over 50 per cent. of mortality was from malaria. In Dacca district it was between 10 - 20 per cent. BAR., 1925 - 26, /XV

262. District Gazetteer , 1912, 72.

263. BAR, 1922 - 23, / vi and / vii; BPHR, 1940, 8; Bengal Public Health Resolution, No. 1791, P.H., 4.

264. East Pakistan District Gazetteer , 262. For the University students' social work see DUAR, 1922 - 23, 22, 23; 1925 - 26, 28 - 29; 1926, 27, 30 - 32; 1931 - 32, 35.

265. See AARDM, 1939 - 40, 12.

266. AARDM, 1926, 60.

267. AARDM, 1926 - 27, 27.

268. Ibid .
The bigger the city, the larger the problem. Calcutta alone claimed 64 per cent of Bengal's deaths from respiratory diseases in 1926. Deaths from these diseases were 7.7 per mille in Calcutta in that year. Howrah, the second largest city in Bengal, had 2.3 deaths per mille from these causes and Dacca's proportion was 0.2. Although these rates were average for the decade, the deaths from respiratory diseases, which included pthysis or consumption, were on the increase in urban areas including Dacca.
See BPHR, 1926, 60.

269. AARDM, 1926 - 27, 26.

270. Ibid, 1929 - 30 (MSS.) ; 1940 - 41, 10.

271. AARDM, 1940 - 41, 10.
The decrease may also be a consequence of poorer reporting in wartime. But since the disease is associated with over crowding and a poor diet, the worsening during 1921 - 27 may indicate the onset of the slump and falling standards of living, while the fall in the death tolls during 1930 - 41 was probably an indication of the recovery from the slump, improved wages and better and more varied diet.

272. See Lady Hartog, 154.
High infant mortality persists in many parts of the world. Frederick Cartwright discusses the causes of infant mortality and reduced life expectancy in Africa, China and India. He notes that the threat to human life in these countries is posed by such diseases as cholera, smallpox, tuberculosis and malaria, combined with 'malnutrition and squalid living conditions'. The challenge of disease is as strong now as it was in the last century. See F.T. Cartwright and M.D. Biddiss, 235.

273. Lady Hartog, 148.

274. Ibid, 154.

275. AARDM, 1909 - 10, 15; 1939 - 40, 12.

276. AARDM, 1918 - 19, 5.

277. Ibid., 1919 - 20, 30 - 31.

278. See Lady Hartog, 148.

279. See the chairman's note in AARDM, 1918 - 19, 5.

280. BPHR, 1921, 10.

281. AARDM, 1926 - 27, 30.

282. BPHR, 1922, 10.

283. AARDM, 1939 - 40, 12.

284. Ibid., 15.

285. The District Magistrate did not expect any spontaneous and voluntary contribution from the Municipality to the Welfare Trust and therefore asked for it in writing at the time of its establishment. See DMR, 19 April, 1921 and also Letter No 1865 M of 22 3.21 from the District Magistrate to the chairman of Dacca Municipality.

286. The relevant sections are 395 and 396 of the Act XV of 1932, and sections 138 R of Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1933 in BPHR, 1936, 100.

287. BPHR, 1936, 100.

288. Ibid., 100 and 102.

289. BPHR, 1937, 316 - 318.

290. BPHR, 1936, 104.

291. Ibid., 1939, 114 - 115.

292. Ibid., 1940, 115 - 116.

293. Ibid., 1941, 216 - 218.

294. Ibid., 1941, 218.

See also AARDM, 1930 - 31, 16; 1939 - 40, 11; 1940 - 41, 10. See also BPHR, 1940, 118 - 119. These welfare centres used to send their staff to women in purdah or in confinement.

295. See AARDM, 1926 - 27, 30 - 31; 1939 - 40, 12; 1940 - 41, 10.

296. AARDM, 1920 - 21, 12; 1939 - 40, 11; 1940 - 41, 12.

297. See District Gazetteer , 1912, 75.

298. Census of India, 1931, vol.V, Part 1, 445.

299. BAR, 1933 - 34, 115.

300 Ibid.; see also BSBR., 1936, 77;

301. BPHR., 1941, 4.

302. AARDM., 1940 - 41, 12; District Magistrate's Report, 1947.

303. Census of India, 1921, vol.V, Part 1, 326 - 27.

304. Ibid., 1931, vol.V., Part 1, 241.

305. Sheppard, 258.

306. Ibid., 259.

307. Ibid., 274.

308. Haider in A City, 124. See also S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 249.

309. Haider in A City, 124.

310. In 1927 - 28 the mullahs of Dacca municipal burial grounds used to draw a salary between Rs 20 - 27. See BEDM., 1927 - 28, 27. In 1941 - 42 their salaries were between Rs 29 - 40. See BEDM., 1941 - 42, 58.

311. District Gazetteers, 1912, 181.

312. DMR, 3 June 1921. Yousuff Khan was also known as Yousuff Jan. Perhaps the majority on the Board did not want to ruffle the religious sentiment of the Muslims as the Khilafat spirit was strong in Bengal during that period.

313. DMR, 30 March, 1921.

314. DMR, 18 January , 1928.

315. DMR, 17 December , 1928.

316. Ibid.

317. DMR, 25 July, 1945.

318. Jon and Rumer Godden, Two under the Indian Sun (London, 1966), 28 - 29.
Although the description was of the Lakhya River and not directly of the Buriganga, it was applicable to the latter as the two rivers were connected and indeed, Lakhya in Narayanganj had the reputation of having much purer water than Buriganga.

319. The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (Second edition ,

London, 1968), 379.

320. Geddes, 15.

321. Ibid., 14.

322. DMP., 28 September 1942.

323. AARDM., 1939 - 40, 15.

324. DMP., 28 September 1942; 26 June 1944.

325. AARDM., 1920 - 21, 5.

326. Ibid., 1940 - 41, 3.

327. Ibid., 1924 - 25, 15; 1926 - 27, 15; 1929 - 30 (MSS); 1940 - 41, 12 - 13.

328. See AARDM., 1929 - 30 (MSS).

329. BAR., 1927 - 28, 116.

330. District Gazetteer , 1912, 175.

331. Ibid., 174; Jatindra Mohan Roy, 286, S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 172 - 73. According to Ahmed the first horse carriage for hire was introduced in Dacca city in 1858 by an Armenian called G.M. Shircore. The number increased rapidly and by 1889 the city had nearly 600 horse carriages. J.M. Roy noted that the first hired horse cart was introduced in the district in 1856, by Sircor, an American merchant. See Jatindra Mohan Roy, 290. Rickshaws came to the city in 1936 and passenger buses within the city were introduced after Partition although the plan for their introduction was prepared in January 1947. See Dhaka Prokash, 12 January 1947, 2. For an interesting account of the introduction of cycle rickshaws in the city see also Satyen Sen, Saharer Itikatha, 70 - 78.

332. Geddes, 10.

333. See the expenditure on the public works in the following chapter, p. 243.

334. AARDM., 1920 - 21, 5; 1940 - 41, 3; District Magistrate's Report, 1947.

335. Geddes, 5.

336. Ibid., 8.

337. Ibid., 8 - 11.

338. AARDM., 1933 - 34, 12; 1938 - 39, 17. See also Dacca Municipality, Record XXV, Bundle No 109. (hereafter DMR).

339. AARDM., 1934 - 35, 14. See also DMR., 1933 - 35, XXV, Bundle No. 113.

340. AARDM., 1926 - 27, 3.

341. Dhaka Prokash, 12 January 1947, 2. Although passenger buses plied between Dacca and Narayanganj, the number of buses within the city increased after Partition.

342. AARDM., 1926 - 27, 3.

343. Ibid., 1935 - 36, 16.

344. AARDM., 1937 - 38, 15. See also DMR., 1935 - 37, XXV, Bundle No. 102.

345. AARDM., 1939 - 40, 17. See also DMR., 1939 - 40, XXV, Bundle No. 115.

346. AARDM., 1940 - 41, 18; 1947 - 48, 12. See also DMR., 1940 - 57, XXV, Bundle No. 36(a).

347. AARDM., 1933 - 34, 12. See also DMR., 1933 - 34, XXV, Bundle No 95.

348. DMP, 4 April 1933. See also DMR., 1932 - 33, XXV, Bundle No. 98.

349. DMP, 2 Jan. 1946. See also DMR., 1945 - 47, XXV, Bundle No. 119.

350. DMP, 12 February, 1943, 4.

351. Ibid.

352. For Dacca's recent transport problem see The Bangladesh Observer, Dacca, 4 July 1977.

353. AARDM., 1929 - 30, (MSS).

354. Ibid., 1939 - 40, 14.

355. Ibid., 1940 - 41, 15 . See also The District Magistrate's Report, 1947.

356. AARDM., 1926 - 27, Appendix K (49.65 miles metalled and 20.35 unmetalled road); 1930 - 31, Appendix K(50.25 metalled and 20.75 unmetalled road); 1939 - 40 appendix K (61.20 metalled and 19.48 unmetalled road); in 1946 - 47 also the metalled and unmetalled roads were as in 1939 - 40. See Appendix K of the letter dates 8 Sept, 1949 from the Divisional Commissioner to the Government of East Bengal, Health and Local Self Government Dept.

357. Bemused, Sideline, The Bangladesh Observer, Dacca, 4 July 1977.

358. District Gazetteer , 1912, 159.

359. Tinker, The Foundations, 247.

360. Haider in A City, 119.

361. (Eighth) Quinquennial Review on the progress of Education in Bengal, 1927 - 32, 3(hereafter BQR).

362. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1919 - 20, 10. (hereafter BPIR) . See also BQR, 1927 - 32, 14.

363. BQR, 1927 - 32, 14.

364. BQR, 1932 - 37, 38.

365. Ibid.

366. BQR, 1927 - 32, 3.

367. Ibid., 13.

368. BQR, 1932 - 37, 32.

369. Tinker, The Foundations, 268.

370. BAR, 1934 - 35, 85.

371. BPIR, 1938 - 39, 10.

372. Ibid., 1929 - 30, 6.

373. BAR, 1935 - 36, 89.

374. AARDM, 1940 - 41, 14.

375. The city had 2,13,218 people of whom 25,586 were children between 5 - 10 years. See Census of India 1941, vol. IV, 15 . See also AARDM, 1940 - 41, 14; 1947 - 48, 15; District Magistrate's Report, 1947.

376. AARDM, 1940 - 41, 14; 1947 - 48, 15.

377. Ibid., 1920 - 21, 5; 1926 - 27, 32.

378. AARDM, 1930 - 31, 18.

379. Ibid., 1940 - 41, 14.

380. Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings, 26 February 1940, vol. 1, 117 - 118, 143 - 145; Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings, 27 March, 1945, vol. 69, 526. (hereafter BLAP).

381. BLAP, 21 February 1945, vol. 69, Census of India, 1931, vol. V, Part 1, 322. By 1931, Dacca city had 422 literate persons per 1000. It was second to Calcutta which had 432

literates per 1000. Howrah having 356 only was in the third place.

382. District Gazetteer , 1912, 161.

383. BLAP, 21 February, 1945, vol. 69, 1946. Independent India also puts more stress on higher education than lower levels. See Binoy Ghose, Banglar Bidyat Samaj, (Calcutta, 1973), 163 - 164.

384. Quoted in Tinker, The Foundations, 278.

385. See Lady Hartog, 137 - 138.

386. See BEDM, 1940 - 41, 28, 38, 55. The average pay for the primary school teachers in the Province as a whole was much lower i.e., Rs 6 in 1927 and Rs 12 in 1947. See Tinker, The Foundations, 272.

See also Report on the All Bengal Primary Teachers Association, Government of West Bengal Education Department, File No 14 - D 30, Serial Nos. 1 - 28, September 1947.

387. DMP, 30 August 1944, 1 - 2.

Chapter 3

Municipal Finance: Constraints and Mismanagement

Finance is a vital aspect of any administrative system. Financial management always requires skill and vigilance, and these become all the more necessary when it comes to utilizing such scanty resources as those with which most Indian municipalities, including the Municipality of Dacca, were obliged to make do during the British colonial period.

Basic public services in the cities of pre-British India were managed by the Kotwal, an official of the central government. He was responsible for providing free kitchens and charity houses for the poor, mosques and local schools for the public, and for administering such day-to-day services as road sweeping and repairing, the maintenance of burial grounds and cremating places and the supervision of markets for the people. The expenditure on these services was administered through the local diwan, but under the supervision of the local government.[1] The Kotwal sometimes acted on his own initiative but permanent facilities, like tanks, reservoirs, lakes, baths, dams, bridges, walls, gates, sarais and hospitals for men and animals, were generally provided by the central or provincial government or, at least, at the instigation of the centre. Even in such cases, though, the costs were usually charged to the local treasury.[2]

There is however some doubt as to how efficiently the services were provided by the Kotwal through his subordinates, and whether the money given by the government was sufficient for the services needed by the people. Some writers have argued that the services in important administrative centres were reasonably efficient, and Ahmed has presumed that consequently Dacca, being a provincial capital, must have been 'tolerably' provided for. In view of the scanty

evidence available, though, any conclusions are heavily dependent on speculation.[3]

Apart from the government's role in initiating and financing public services, private efforts, both individual and communal, also played a great part - sometimes even greater than the government's.[4] It has been maintained that 'the well-to-do and rich vied with one another in spending as much as they could on such works and thereby to earn both good name here and spiritual bliss hereafter. No fund subscribing organisations were needed to remind them of their duties.'[5]

During the early British period in India, house-taxes were collected on a voluntary basis in the towns to pay the chaukidars who watched the streets and also collected the tax from the people.[6] But the main source of funds for municipal services seems to have been the charity of the elites. It was not until Act XV of 1837, by which a portion of the chaukidari tax might be spent upon municipal services and improvements, that any government move was made to finance urban services - and then only on a modest scale.[7]

Act X of 1842 was the first piece of legislation enacted under British rule in India which introduced taxation 'specifically for municipal purposes' outside the Presidency towns.[8] This Act, which was permissive, not mandatory, and required the public to ask for its implementation, applied only to Bengal. The District Magistrates who had taken the place of the Mughal Kotwals attempted to apply the Act in various places but without much success. Many people did not want any municipal body: still more objected to taxation for municipal purposes. They not only refused to pay the tax, but went to the length of

prosecuting the Magistrate for trespass when he attempted to levy it.[8A]

Act XXVI of 1850, which was applicable to the whole of British India, modified the direct nature of taxation; the choice in the assessment of house tax or town duties and in the mode of levying them was left to the inhabitants of particular towns to make. It was not a success in all provinces. As the assessment of houses was usually made by panchayats, Bombay and the North Western Provinces, which had more vigorous panchayat systems than Bengal and Madras, achieved more under this Act than did the latter two Presidencies.[9] By Act XX of 1856, the chaukidars, who had been community servants for so long, were turned into government servants and the panchayats' power to appoint and control them was taken away. The panchayats, however, were permitted to retain their power to assess the house tax and town duties and part of this assessment continued to be used for municipal services. There is no evidence to indicate whether or not Dacca conformed exactly to this pattern.[10]

As transport and communications improved in India from the mid-nineteenth century, urbanization also increased, enlarging the need for improved sanitation and public health, along with other civic amenities. The problem was to finance these services. The newly growing middle classes of India were articulate in their demands for various facilities but ' detested the idea of contributing anything towards the increasing cost of administration '.[11] The inelastic land revenue had always been the main source of income for the government; during the post-Mutiny era, the need for new sources of revenue was desperately felt. A tax on income was the expedient adopted to replenish the exchequer: but it raised the antagonism of the European business community, who forced the Government of India to abolish it in 1864.[12]

Because the professional and business classes objected to paying the new taxes, the income of central government could not be expanded. Consequently, local requirements had to be entirely met by local taxes. The cost of urban police was charged to municipal taxes, and as the towns were allowed to enjoy municipal institutions for civic improvements, education and other local objects, they were empowered by Act III of 1864 to raise money from the local people to finance these services.[13] Financial considerations therefore constituted a most important factor in the decentralization of municipal government in India and the power to raise funds locally for local needs thus became a cornerstone of the modern Indian municipal system.

Under Act III of 1864 Dacca Municipality was empowered, like other mofussil municipalities, to raise funds for the town police and conservancy through rates on houses, lands, horses, vehicles and so on.[14] The old system, whereby the Municipality depended on the surplus of the chaukidari tax and town duties, had yielded insufficient money to undertake large projects of public utility.[15] The new powers were designed to ensure a wider and a more regular flow of money into the municipal exchequer, with a stronger possibility of improving services.

The solution to the financial problems looked far easier in the abstract framework of the law, however, than in the context of social reality. Laws lose their social validity unless they are obeyed by a large number of people. In Dacca, as elsewhere in India, people were opposed to direct municipal taxation the benefit of which might not come directly to them.[16]

Because of the ratepayers' opposition, the legal power of taxation acquired by many municipalities in India remained largely theoretical. For their maintenance and

expansion, the municipalities had to depend on government grants and loans, their own funds being still too small to modernize on a significant scale. Even government grants were not generous in the nineteenth century, due to the ' straits from which the Imperial finances never emerged ' after the Mutiny in 1857.[17]

The need for municipal services and the resources to finance them increased quickly in Dacca with the growth of population in the city, and soon after its birth the Municipality fell into financial difficulties. Although the civic body did apply its legal powers to impose a house-tax at 7½ per cent of the annual rental value, it did so in the teeth of biting criticism, complaints and angry petitions from the ratepayers, supported by a local newspaper. Nevertheless the funds collected were not sufficient for the services provided. The Government of Bengal, therefore, passed an Act in 1870 especially for Dacca Municipality to allow the commissioners to raise the house rate from 7½ per cent to 10 per cent. It took seven years, however, to overcome the ratepayers' opposition and to persuade them to agree to raise the rate to no more than 8 per cent. Since most of the commissioners themselves had landed property and houses in the city, their hesitation to increase the tax was, perhaps, not surprising.[18] The funds provided by this modest tax were certainly not sufficient to modernize the city's amenities on the scale that had recently been suggested by Dr Henry Charles Cutcliffe in the first full-scale sanitary scheme devised for the city.[19]

In the earliest available formal budget - ' a modest half-a-page affair ', produced by Dacca Municipality during 1874-75, seven sources of income were listed. These were : house tax, wheel and horse tax, tolls on ferries and pounds, rent on town land, fines and ' other sources '. A privy tax, permitted under Bengal Act VII of 1870, was also proposed by the commissioners. They even estimated the yield,

which would have been Rs. 21,600. But, due to opposition from the ratepayers, the tax was not put into effect during the year when the formal budget was prepared.[20] Nevertheless, in the event the Municipality was able to claim to have achieved a surplus budget, the actual collection amounting to Rs 64,240, as against an estimated Rs 61,842, while there was a still bigger gap between the estimated expenditure of Rs 90,191 and the actual expenditure of Rs 64,694. This satisfactory outcome seems to have been made possible by a reassessment of property holdings completed during the year and the chairman congratulated the board on an 'appreciable saving' - although it was in fact a deficit budget since actual expenditure exceeded actual receipts. He saw bright financial prospects: the ' town has taken a great stride in prosperity since the tax was first assessed in 1864 - 65, and even apart from inequalities of assessment, the general rise in the rent of the houses would give a large increase '.[21] The large increase did occur, but the net gain that year proved to be only Rs. 2,000 since so many people appealed against the revised assessments and some were remitted by the Municipality.[22] In any case an increase in house tax through reassessment could not of itself sustain or bring about dynamic change in the municipal services.[22A]

Perhaps as a result of the public antagonism towards paying taxes, subsequent collections were not as good as they had been in 1874 - 75. Yet new services were being added while the old services expanded. It is true that one new tax, long under consideration, was added to the Municipality's armoury - the scavenging or privy tax introduced in all first class mofussil municipalities by Bengal Act VI of1878. But the tax, on all property owners at two per cent annually, was particularly unpopular,[23] being resented as an intrusion on household privacy,[24] so that collections were usually low. Even with government grants the Municipality could scarcely remain solvent.[25] Progress, therefore, was disappointingly slow.

The poor rate of advance in the years down to 1884, during which the District Magistrate was ex-officio chairman of the Municipality, was, so Ahmed argues, due to lack of funds and a periodic failure of dedication or application on the part of the administrators. Yet, he suggests, ' valuable lessons ' were learnt during the official period and ' the foundations of good local government were laid '. The introduction in 1884 of ' the alien concept of democratic local self government ' seemed full of promise.[26] The evidence makes it seem very doubtful, however, whether 'valuable lessons ' had actually been learned by the ratepayers or the commissioners so far as the financial management of the Municipality was concerned. The very first annual administration report produced under the elected board revealed a most bleak picture of the Municipality's financial situation :

> Cash balance in hand is spent up, the municipality will have to face a deficit. The regular expenses of the water-works and the expenditure on account of house services are the chief causes for this state of finance. We have to spend about Rs. 15,000 a year for the maintenance of the waterworks without any appreciable income from that head. In the conservancy department our expenses are not at all met by the income derived from the house service.[27]

But it would be easy to match the picture painted in 1885 with the reports of many years in the twentieth century - even in the 1960 s, the so called 'decade of reforms': for the provision of services under the heads of conservancy and waterworks never became self-sufficient. From the 1880 s onwards the deficit had constantly to be made good with loans or grants from government. And as in 1885 so in subsequent years there was a regular refusal to employ in full the powers of taxation enjoyed by the Municipality.[28]

When the Municipality of Dacca was empowered under Bengal Act V of 1864 to tax the ratepayers on houses and

lands within the municipal area, it took the opportunity, but when the maximum was raised to 10 per cent of the annual rental value by the Bengal Act VII of 1870, especially passed for Dacca, the commissioners refrained from using the full powers given to them. The same Act gave the Municipality authority to impose a privy tax, but this also was not made use of until Bengal Act VI of 1878 made the imposition of such a tax compulsory for the first class municipalities. In the same way, the municipal body brought into being under Bengal Act III of 1884 did not use the increased financial powers granted to the commissioners under the same Act. Previously municipalities could not charge for lighting or water supply, but despite the new powers no water rate was levied in Dacca until 1910 and no lighting rate before 1947.[29]

Dacca Municipality was not unique in its slowness to use fully the opportunities provided by the Acts. It is seen in Tinker's work on India, Pakistan and Burma as a common attitude of many municipal boards in the sub-continent.[30] It was not always the poverty of the general ratepayers, or their usual unwillingness to pay taxes, that restrained the municipalities from charging the people for the services provided. The fear of slanderous public criticism was also an important factor. Although, during the official period of Dacca Municipality, the indigenous commissioners did not have to face election, they were nevertheless as sensitive to attack then as they were after 1884.[31] Sir Henry Sharp, an ex-Indian Civil servant, in a long chapter on the Bengalis in his memoirs, narrated his personal experience of their ' super sensitivity ' to public criticism.[32] When the elected board started managing the Municipality from 1884, both the new and the old commissioners proved as reluctant to impose increased taxation as ever. Now, however, they could plead direct responsibility to an electorate, whose wishes they must

take into account under a democratic system.[33]

But, however reluctant they might be to impose unpopular taxation which might imperil their chances of re-election, the Dacca commissioners were driven to demand more from their fellow citizens. In part this was a consequence of the imposition of new burdens and requirements by government; in part it flowed from the ambitions and rivalries of municipalities and their professional officials, anxious to secure for their city the prestige, the government funding and the practical fruit of improvements introduced in other Indian towns; and in part it represented a reply to the growth of public expectations - at least on the part of those in a position to exercise pressure on the Municipality. So, having long held the house and land tax at 8 per cent, in 1900 - 1901 the commissioners raised it to the maximum rate of 10 per cent fixed in 1870. The conservancy tax was also increased and fixed at 6 per cent, while in 1910 a water rate was imposed for the first time, though the power to charge for water had been given in 1884. Moreover, though Act III of 1884 permitted this tax to be levied at the rate of 6 per cent on houses with a water connection and of 3 per cent on houses within reach of public standpipes, in Dacca the rates, applied in 1910 and continued throughout the period under review, were of only 5 and 2 per cent respectively, even though the waterworks funds were never sufficient to cover costs.[34]

In Dacca, as in most of Bengal, the house and land taxes were the largest source of income, and the conservancy tax the next largest. In the fourth place came a number of small sources - pounds, slaughter house fees, registration fees for horses and vehicles, for example - lumped together under the heading of miscellaneous sources. The water rate yielded comparatively important sums, but road and ferry tolls and the still smaller market dues were minor sources. In Bengal,

that great standby of northern municipalities, octroi, was not levied at all. Taxation in Bengal thus was largely direct - the most visible and most resented form - and fell very directly upon property which also ensured that it would be resisted by the electorate, which was restricted to property owners. Partly for this reason the income of Bengal municipalities compared rather poorly with that of municipalities in Bombay, U.P., the Punjab or Madras.[35]

This made the third largest head in the municipal income of Dacca, and of many other Bengal towns , the more significant. That head was government grants. There were drawbacks attached to such grants, for they were usually earmarked for specific projects or services and ' were often liable to be surrendered if the grant was not expended within the current financial year '.[36] But then, in the nineteenth century, municipal boards did not have the freedom to spend any of their money as they wished, being legally obliged to get their budget proposals and most of their staff appointments approved by government: ' there was a close government check upon the annual budget ', as Tinker notes.[37] It was also a drawback that grants were important enough an item to encourage the boards to rely on government rather than on the exploitation and expansion of their own resources. During the last decades of the nineteenth century world depression and then recurrent famine strictly limited the assistance which government could give and reduced Dacca Municipality to a perpetual, depressing financial struggle to maintain a sizeable establishment and a large number of expensive civic services from inadequate resources.[38]

When the financial condition of government improved at the beginning of the twentieth century, more grants started to come to the aid of the municipalities, though they were given mainly to encourage primary education.[39] Dacca was particularly fortunate, however, as the grants

which it received took note of its elevation in 1905 to the position of capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The total amount soared dramatically from the Rs. 250 in grants and contributions of 1900 - 1901 to the generous Rs. 133,961 of 1910 - 1911,[40] and since this sum covered a number of services, Dacca Municipality was able to expand them quite sharply. The city's new status was taken away at the Coronation Durbar of 1911, but generous grants were awarded to all the provinces, including Bengal, so that the loss was not too harshly felt. These grants were provided to finance primary education, sanitary works and improvements and construction of roads. They reflected the 1907 Decentralization Commission's insistence upon the need ' to arouse interest in local government, thereby increasing opportunities of the members '.[41] Dacca received particular grants for extending the waterworks and improving the conservancy system by creating underground sewerage in the city.[42]

The war of 1914 - 1918 stopped the process of devolution which had first been suggested by the Decentralization Commission and whose implementation had been initiated by the Morley - Minto Reforms of 1909. The government had ' recognized in principle that in such matters as the planning of budgets, increases in rates of taxation, the entertainment of new staff, etc., greater freedom might be granted to local bodies, particularly to municipalities '.[43] But the war overshadowed all other issues. It needed centralized effort on all fronts, including the financial. After the war, however, the Montagu - Chelsmford Reforms of 1919, given effect in 1920, gave remarkable financial freedom to the local bodies in comparison with the previous cautious deliberation of government. Moreover the financial devolution looked more like freedom as it was carried through not by I.C.S. officers but by the elected ministers of the provinces.[44] The municipalities, so Tinker argues, ' were given almost complete independence

in the sphere of expenditure of public money; periodical government audit could not be used as a means of control '.[45] It was not, however, complete freedom. Despite legislative sanction to increase taxation, the municipalities still required government approval for all proposals to increase rates or fees before their implementation. Moreover, the municipalities imposed dependence upon themselves : rather than asking their newly created or enlarged electorates for the money needed to finance their expanding services, they chose to appeal to government for grants with which to balance their budgets. And government grants were more easily available in the twenties. So, though the post war boom brought prosperity to some cities including Dacca, and this could have been the moment for municipalities to develop self-reliance, the easy availability of government grants turned dependence on government into a habit with many civic bodies.[46] Dacca certainly enjoyed the more generous grants which came from the provincial government under the Indian ministers in the twenties. For instance Dacca Municipality received Rs. 274,785 during 1920 - 1921, and Rs. 303,154 in 1926 - 27 which was more than twice as much as had been obtained in 1911 and some 50 times as much as at the beginning of the century.[47]

Not only government grants but the other sources also yielded more income to many municipalities. This was due to higher property taxes, ' following higher assessment of property, made possible by the rise in house values; and there were increases in octroi and other levies on trade, consequent upon the feverish wave of buying and selling '.[48] This was especially true of Bombay, where the municipal income during the twenties rose by 40 per cent due to her prosperous cotton market. Dacca was not so fortunate; there was no corresponding industrial or commodity boom, and of course no octroi was levied. Nevertheless the value of properties was rising, due to the increase in population and the demand

for houses and land in the city.[49] The early twenties were not financially difficult for Dacca Municipality. There was a slow rise in its income by about 3 per cent a year between 1918 - 1920. It was not a steady rise, though, as a no-tax campaign by a group of ratepayers in 1922 badly affected the collection of taxes and communal riots during 1925 - 1926 brought a drastic fall in the municipal income of Dacca, receipts falling by 35 per cent. Thereafter, however, the financial problem was resolved and income increased by 40 per cent during the period 1926 to 1927.[50] The following table sets out the income figures of Dacca Municipality for the first three decades of the century :[51]

Year	Income	Year	Income
1900 - 01	190,936	1920 - 21	777,867
1910 - 11	305,159	1925 - 26	505,346
1919 - 20	755,450	1926 - 27	1,069,719

In the thirties the world slump affected all public finances badly. The grants from the provincial governments became less generous and public services provided by Indian municipalities shrank noticeably,[52] demonstrating how dependent the municipalities had become on government grants. As for local taxation, the slump affected particular provinces in different ways. For instance, taxes on trade showed a general tendency to fall off during the slump as the manufacture of consumer goods in general shrank.[53] The income of Dacca Municipality had fallen to Rs. 460,568 during 1930 - 1931 from Rs. 1,069,719 during 1926 - 1927.[54] As Dacca Municipality depended mainly on house tax, which was relatively stable, its finances did not collapse entirely during the recession. It was, nevertheless, a testing time for all the municipalities in India.[55]

However stable the house tax was, the yield from this particular source of income, like from other sources, depended on the willingness of the people to pay the taxes and the efficiency of the collection machinery. During the recession people who even in the prosperous twenties had shown little enthusiasm for regular payment of taxes, were still less ready to pay. The income also decreased because remissions were more generously granted and penalties were sparingly charged.[56] Normally it would have been easier for a local body to avail itself of the increased powers of taxation given by the statutes; but it did not seem politically right to raise the rates of taxes when the recession had badly affected the country.

In 1932, under the Bengal Municipal Act of that year, Dacca, along with four other municipalities in Bengal, Howrah, Kurseong, Darjeeling and Chittagong, received an opportunity to improve its finances by raising the rate of tax on land holdings to 15 per cent of their annual rental value.[57] At the same time the maximum water rate was fixed at 7½ per cent and the lighting rate at 3 per cent on the annual value of holdings.[58] Dacca, however, did not avail itself of these opportunities fully, holding the house rate at 10 per cent during the period under review, while the water rate remained at 5 per cent. The lighting rate was never imposed, no matter how pressing the financial situation became.[59]

The Act of 1932, though altering tax limits, did not open any new sources of income to the municipalities. Apart from the rates on land holdings and houses, water, lighting and conservancy, the municipalities, as under the old Act of 1884, were allowed to levy taxes on carriages, horses , elephants, camels and donkeys.[60] This general measure yielded only a modest income in Dacca. East Bengal, wet and green, was scarcely a natural habitat for camels, and though the elephant was certainly at home

and Dacca had been the Mughal centre for elephants captured in the ' Hati Kheda ' of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, these animals in Dacca were status symbols for nawabs and big zamindars rather than working animals as in the timber yards of Chittagong or Rangoon. Even their value as status symbols came under threat with the introduction of the hansom carriage and the motor car. Horses and donkeys, both probably introduced under the Hindu kings, were also being slowly driven out by the competition of the bicycle, car, motor bus and lorry in this period. The horse as an animal to be ridden gave ground more quickly than the horse between the shafts of tikka ghari, but the donkey as a beast of burden, laden with the dhoba's great bundles of washing, or with bricks and sand on building sites, has still not been quite driven out by bicycle and tricycle or by the lorry. But the familiar wooden carts and thelas of Dacca drawn by bullocks or pushed by men, remained undefeated by the changes of time. Modernization passed them by and could not sweep them off the streets of Dacca. Man and cow remain an integral part of Dacca's image as they still are of Bangladesh's.

The municipalities could also charge a fee on the registration of carts, tolls on ferries and bridges, and a fee on vessels moored within the limits of the municipality at ghats or landing places constructed and maintained by the commissioners. The commissioners could also charge a fee in respect of the issue and renewal of any licence which they were allowed to grant under the Act of 1932, in respect of which no fee or tax was levied.[61] Finally a tax on trades, professions and callings could be imposed on companies transacting business within the municipal area.

These powers had been allowed to the commissioners by the old Act of 1884. And as under the old Act the

commissioners were not entirely free to choose at what level to pitch a rate or a licence fee. Where the maximum or minimum scale of fees was not specified by the Acts, the commissioners were supposed to have the scale approved by the local government.[62] For instance, the tolls on ferries and bridges were to be fixed at municipal meetings: but the rates would be effective only when they had received the sanction of the Commissioner of the Division.[63] Under both the old and the new Acts, the local government had not only the powers of approving or disapproving the scale of the tolls but also of ordering the commissioners to cease levying any toll or withdrawing such orders at any time.[64]

The local government's powers to approve or disapprove of rates in municipal taxes did not in fact restrict the income of the municipalities. The intention of government was to help them expand and be self-reliant financially, rather than shrink and become more dependent on its help. Although any power of the local government over municipal affairs was interpreted by the elected commissioners as interference and obstruction rather than help,[65] the implications of some sections of the Acts were clearly otherwise. There were certain aspects of administration which the municipalities could not cope with, if left to their own devices. For instance, the municipalities were given the power under the old and new Acts to collect taxes from defaulters by selling their movable property, except for ploughs, plough-cattle and other tools or implements of agriculture or trade.[66] If, however, as was not uncommon, the commissioners failed to recover the arrears, they could always seek help from the local government. At their request, the magistrates had the power to issue a warrant for tha attachment and sale of the defaulter's movable property.[67] Although the commissioners were also empowered to sue the defaulters, they were reluctant, for political reasons, to apply it.[68] Municipalities, therefore, had a great ally in the local government, on to whom the commissioners could shift an unpleasant responsibility when the need arose.

The income from animals and vehicles constituted a minor source of income in Dacca, as in other mofussil municipalities of Bengal.[69] The registration fee for horse carriages and carts was not very high and could easily be evaded. For example, the law stated that the carts 'used' in the city should be registered, the fee for each annual registration not exceeding six rupees. Within this limit, the commissioners could fix whatever rate they wished, and they also had the power to seize and sell unregistered carts 'used' in the city.[70] The vulnerable part of this regulation concerned the definition of the term, 'used,' by which the Act meant those carts used on business on an average of at least twice a week.[71] There was in practice no way of establishing that the carts were actually being so used every week. The cart owners were therefore frequently able to evade the registration fee, while the commissioners could abuse their power to seize carts either to punish offenders or to reward people whom they considered to be deserving. Horse carriages had various rates of registration fee, according to the number of wheels, their diameter and the number of horses drawing the carriage. Both the 1884 and 1932 Acts allowed the municipalities to tax carriages as follows:[72]

	Per Quarter			
	1884		1932	
	Rs	As	Rs	As
For every four-wheeled carriage drawn by two horses	4	8	6	0
For every four-wheeled carriage drawn by one horse or a pair of horses under thirteen hands	3	0	4	8
For every two-wheeled carriage	2	8	3	0

These rates were clear but there was a provision in both Acts, exempting carriages with wheels of less than twenty-four inches in diameter, which could be misused both by the carriage-owners or the commissioners to suit their purposes. With so many loopholes, the tax on horse-drawn

vehicles was never very productive, and receipts fell throughout this period as they were ousted by new forms of transport, such as bicycles, tricycles and motor buses, on which municipalities were not empowered to impose taxes.

The income of Dacca Municipality from the tax on trades, professions and callings was also small. According to both the Act of 1884 and that of 1932, the municipalities could levy a tax, within specified rates, on trades, professions and callings. The rates applied to any company 'transacting business within the municipality for profit or as a benefit society of which the paid-up capital is equivalent to'-[73]

	Maximum half yearly tax in rupees
a. More than Rs 1,000,000	200
b. More than Rs 500,000 but not more than Rs 1,000,000	100
c. More than Rs 100,000 but not more than Rs 500,000	50
d. Rs 100,000 or less	20

As the sanctioned estimate of the yield of this tax for the year 1940 - 41 in Dacca was only Rs 1,700, it seems that the Dacca Municipality made no attempt to utilize this power to the fullest extent. Although Dacca was not a city with a large number of big companies, there certainly were enough medium and small sized trading and manufacturing companies to have yielded more than this.[74]

The Act of 1932 did not provide new tax heads, but it did allow higher rates for existing heads. Since prices were falling during the mid thirties, even the old yields might therefore have proved adequate for the municipal amenities. If the yields were actually pushed up, the budgets ought to have looked healthier than before. The situation in Dacca Municipality did improve as the thirties drew to a close, the municipal income rising to Rs 814,344 in 1938 - 39. However, the World War which started in 1939

put a stop to this progress and the income of the Municipality fell back to the level it had been at when the slump began.

The war brought in its wake a rise in the prices of commodities, shortages and dislocation. Bengal had an additional calamity to suffer. This was the famine of 1943 in which nearly a million and a half people died of starvation; Dacca was one of the worst hit districts. The price of rice rose sharply after a partial crop failure in the winter of 1942. As rice is food (anna) and food is rice in Bengal, this price rise spelt disaster for the people of limited means who constituted the vast majority in the province. The Chief Minister of Bengal, Fazlul Huq, who had won his election in 1937 on the slogan of 'dal-bhat' (lentils and rice) for everyone, thereupon expressed his fear that there might be a rice deficit in Bengal the following year. His warning so encouraged merchant speculation that rice soon disappeared from the markets altogether. The timely import of foodstuffs could have eased the situation, but the whole process of grain movement was disrupted by the army's prior claims upon transport and the general inefficiency of administration in Bengal.[75] The government's attempts to control prices failed as they could not supply sufficient rice at controlled rates. In Dacca bazar, the price of rice was Rs 40 per maund at the beginning of the famine. This was already high enough to be regarded as a famine price. During the autumn of 1943, however, the price soared to Rs 120 per maund. Other foodstuffs, like vegetables, fish, chicken, eggs and milk were also selling at abnormally high prices - six or seven times the normal rate.[76] Men, women and children in their thousands crowded the langar khanas (gruel kitchens) run by the Dacca Relief Committee. This was a citizens' unofficial relief organization, an all-party committee, which was entrusted by the District Magistrate with the distribution of rice, flour, lentils, sugar and other necessities supplied by government. Through a rationing system the Committee sold these essentials to every family which was prepared to pay the controlled prices. Apart from the rationing for those who could pay, and the langar khanas for the destitutes, a number of cheap canteens were opened

by the Relief Committee for the 'middle classes' and milk centres for young children, nursing mothers and invalids. Although the food situation had improved by November 1943, a severe epidemic of malaria then broke out in Dacca. Cholera, dysentery and other diseases which normally accompany famine also made their appearance. A few weeks previously it had been the dead bodies of those who succumbed to starvation which were seen in the streets of Dacca; now it was the prostrated figures of men, women and children struck down by illness. This deepened and prolonged the general atmosphere of gloom.[77]

At last, however, at the end of 1943, prices came down as the Bengal government achieved a better grip on the food supply and the bountiful paddy crop of the winter ripened.[78] In some surplus districts of Bengal prices fell as low as Rs 15 per maund and even in Dacca, which was a deficit district, the price came down to Rs 27 per maund. Nevertheless, this was still too high for many people and was 'paid either by a very long purse or in desperation.'[79] Apart from this unprecedented calamity, communal riots also created disruption in 1946 and 1947. Both disasters had their effect on municipal finances, in a number of ways. Neither politically nor, perhaps, morally did the commissioners consider it wise to increase taxes after the famine of 1943. The number of rate payers did not increase much and more leniency was shown towards the existing ratepayers with regard to tax remissions.[80] During communal tension, collecting taxes in the first place became very difficult.[81] After the war ended, as the financial condition was starting to improve again, Dacca Municipality was superseded by the provincial government that came to power in East Pakistan, following the Partition of India in 1947.[82] The following table gives a picture of the fluctuating annual income of Dacca Municipality for a few sample years covering over one and a half decades:[83]

Year	Income in rupees
1930 - 31	460,568
1938 - 39	814,344
1940 - 41	640,097
1946 - 47	869,253

One expedient to which municipalities could resort to supplement their incomes was to raise money by borrowing from the government or on the open market. Their borrowing powers were regulated successively by the Local Authorities Loans Acts of 1871, 1879 and 1914.[84] From 1889 onwards, the government made advances to the municipalities and other borrowers from a special account maintained in each province, known as the Provincial Advance and Loan Account. The provincial governments had to pay interest on these funds until 1 April 1921, when the responsibility for financing the Provincial Loan Account was transferred entirely to the provincial governments.[85]

This, however, did not mean greater freedom and opportunity for the local bodies with regard to borrowing from the government, as government consistently followed a conservative policy in this respect. Indian municipalities were never encouraged to develop their own loan policies under British rule. The objects, amounts and terms of all municipal loans had to be approved by the government even when they were raised on the open market. There was in addition a statutory limit as to the amount which could be raised. Under the Municipal Loans Act of 1914, debt charges could not exceed ten per cent of the annual value of the assessable property of the municipality. Debt charges included charges on account of interest and repayment of loans. The municipalities usually raised loans on the security of rates and taxes.[86] They could usually borrow for thirty years with the provincial government's sanction, but for terms longer than that the loans had to be sanctioned by both the provincial and central governments. Similar sanctions were required even for loans raised in the open market, when they amounted to more than five lakhs of rupees.[87]

The government controlled the borrowing power of the municipalities also, through auditing the loans accounts and scrutinizing the municipalities' budgets, to ensure that provisions had been made for paying the interest and repaying the loans. A statutory priority was given to the repayment of loans over other payments.[88]

Public borrowing was discouraged, to prevent the municipalities from falling into enormous debts due to the reckless spending which the government feared they were likely to indulge in. Government's conservative policies in this respect certainly restricted municipal finance and services from expanding as much as they could have done given more freedom and encouragement in this area. Few Indian municipalities raised loans on the open market.[89] Most of them, including the corporations, borrowed mainly from the government, although the rate of interest on government loans during the period under review was 4½ per cent: higher than in the open market.[90]

Because of the statutory restrictions, as well as the cautiousness and perhaps inertia of the commissioners, loans never became a major source of revenue for Indian municipalities. In Dacca, loans were very small and always raised from the government.[91]

So far, only the broad outlines of Dacca's revenues have been considered, particularly the unsteady growth of its resources from some Rs 191,000 in 1900 - 01, to Rs 305,000 in 1910 - 11, Rs 778,000 in 1920 - 21, Rs 461,000 in 1930 -31 and so to Rs 640,000 in 1940 - 41. During these forty years, there were occasionally dramatic fluctuations, from nearly eight lakh rupees in 1920 - 21, for example, to five lakhs in 1925 - 26, up to eleven lakhs the next year and down again to less than five lakhs of rupees in 1930 -31. There had, however, been little change in the types of taxes levied and surprisingly little in the proportion of the total budget income which each head provided. Having established the general picture of the income of Dacca Municipality over this period, it is now necessary to examine the important sources of revenue in more detail.[91A]

The income of a municipality depends on its ability to raise taxes. In Dacca, the Municipality's most important source of income was the tax on houses and lands, which was often referred to as a tax on holdings. The definition of a

holding was the same under both the Act of 1884 and that of 1932;[92] it meant land held under one title or agreement and surrounded by one set of boundaries. If two or more holdings formed part of the premises of a dwelling house, or a factory, warehouse or place of trade or business, such holdings would be deemed as one holding for taxation. The basis of assessment was the annual rental value of the holding, which included both land and buildings.[93] The owner of the property was liable to pay both this house tax and other general rates. The service rates, when not consolidated with the general rates, were paid by the occupiers. As the general rates were assessed on the basis of the income the owner could derive from his property, rentable properties which remained vacant for a specified number of days in the year were entitled to a remission or refund of tax.[94] Very poor people, the annual rental value of whose holdings was less than six rupees, were exempted from the rates altogether; so were public places of worship, burial and burning grounds.[95]

There were some properties which could not be let, such as schools, colleges and hotels, or were not intended to be let, such as owner occupied houses. The Acts provided for 'assessing their annual value at a certain percentage of their cost of construction and the value of land with deductions for depreciation.'[96] In the case of buildings not to let or owner occupied:

> the annual value is deemed to be an amount which may be equal to but not exceeding 7½% of the actual cost of the erection of the building plus a reasonable ground rent for the land comprised in the building. But when the actual cost exceeds one lakh of rupees the percentage on the annual value in respect of so much of the cost in excess of one lakh of rupees shall not exceed one fourth of the percentage. The value of machinery and furniture is not taken into account for the determination of the annual value of a holding. (97)

On the other hand, government buildings were subject to special rates. For instance, government buildings in Bombay

were assessed by an officer appointed by the government and at seven-eighths of the ordinary rate. In the Central Provinces, the maximum assessment was 7½ per cent of the annual value, while in Calcutta the value of Improvement Trust property was taken as the purchase cost and there were in addition special provisions for the assessment of Port Trust property. In Dacca, the rate of holding tax on government buildings was 7½ per cent before and during the period under review. All of these rates were calculated on the basis of a 'contractor's estimate,' because the annual value could not be ascertained in the ordinary way.[98]

Actually fixing these rates was a complex, and potentially risky, business. The gross annual rental value of a building was in practice no more than an abstraction, representing 'a hypothetical rent paid by a hypothetical tenant to a hypothetical landlord.'[99] Everything depended on the skill, training and experience of the assessors. These could be appointed in various ways, either government or the municipal commissioners taking the responsibility. The local government had the power to make a list of assessors and require the municipal commissioners to appoint one from it. Local government also had the discretionary power to authorize municipal boards, at their request, to appoint their own assessors, subject to the approval of the local government.[100] If the municipalities failed to appoint their assessors within a time specified by the local government, the responsibility for making appointments would fall on the local government.[101] During the early period of municipal administration, valuation and revaluation of property was carried out by officers lent by government. As the local bodies became more representative of the people, however, the commissioners themselves took over the assessment in many municipalities. One of the reasons was the general poverty of the municipalities. Many could not afford to employ well qualified assessors who naturally expected to be well paid too. Another reason was undoubtedly political. Assessment could effectively be used by the commissioners as an avenue of patronage. In many Indian municipalities from 1885 onwards, assessments were taken

over by committees consisting of the chairman with other commissioners.[102] The quality of assessments done by such committees was regularly condemned all over India. Their inefficiency resulted from their lack of specialized knowledge and also from the exposed position of commissioners who found it difficult to assess 'without fear or favour' when they owed their position to their success at the polls.[103] Even when the assessment list was made by an outside assessor, the municipal commissioners could alter the list if they thought there had been any 'clerical or arithmetical error' because new buildings had been added to the assessed holdings, old ones demolished or existing ones altered.[104]

S.U. Ahmed notes that in Dacca, after the municipality had been formally inaugurated in 1864, the commissioners acted as assessors of rates under the supervision of the chairman, the vice-chairman and another commissioner.[105] As the chairman was, until 1884, the District Magistrate, the assessment was actually carried out under official supervision. Such supervision continued even after 1885, when the chairman was chosen by the commissioners from among the elected members of the board, because the assessment was made with the help of an officer, usually a Sub-Deputy Collector, lent by the government at the request of the commissioners.[105A]

Although the general assessment of property was quinquennial, provision existed for municipalities to reassess holdings if alterations were made to holdings in the meantime.[106] The commissioners, therefore, could always increase municipal income by continuing, partial reassessment. In Dacca, general assessment or reassessment usually led to an increase in income from the sources affected.[107] To take a few examples, the assessment made the house tax increase by Rs 1,392 in 1900 - 01 and the privy tax by Rs 839 from the previous year. In 1910 - 11, the general assessment made on old, new and improved holdings increased the demands under house and privy tax by Rs. 51,150 and Rs 18,261 respectively from the previous year. In 1920 - 21, a partial revision of assessment on new and improved holdings resulted

in a net increase of Rs 1,556 after deducting the remission of Rs 3,171 granted during the year.[108]

Although they took advantage of official expertise in drawing up assessment lists in Dacca, the commissioners did have the authority to make alterations in the lists as they thought fit. In 1922 - 23, the list was remade by the commissioners themselves, without any assistance from the government.[109] Their independent action may have been prompted by political considerations, as was suspected by the ratepayers and alleged by a local newspaper. The municipal commissioners rejected the imputation, arguing that it was undignified to accept an assessor imposed by the local government and that, besides, the 'work done by a government nominee will always be more costly but need not be more thorough or efficient.'[110]

This last argument was denounced by the Dhaka Prokash, which, claiming to be the voice of the ratepayers, denounced the assessment as inefficient, illegal and prejudicial. It was inefficient because the commissioners were not qualified and experienced in the specialized field of property valuation. It was done illegally because the assessment list was made up by the commissioners without actually assessing the holdings. Finally, its terms favoured the rich against the poor.[111] Objection petitions from the ratepayers were numerous. But whether this was because the assessment was particularly inequitable, because of economic distress that year or because of the political situation in the city, it is hard to be sure, given the readiness with which objections were raised against all assessments, irrespective of their authors.[112]

While it might be humanly impossible to produce any totally equitable assessment, relative impartiality could be expected from assessors who were independent both of the commissioners and the voters. Even in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, however, where specialist officers carried out assessments for the corporations, bias and corruption were not eliminated. Indeed, in Calcutta the election of the rating officer by the Corporation became a key political issue, the job being a prize which the party in

power distributed in recognition of loyal services. The situation was better in Bombay and Madras, where the executive officers were elected by the ratepayers and so were not beholden to the politicians; nevertheless, they could not be wholly independent of the commissioners who were their employers. Indeed, Dr Gyan Chand argued in 1946:

> taking the country as a whole it may be stated that independence of officers responsible for assessment from any control on the part of the electorate, which is an essential condition of its efficiency, does not exist. (113)

The unsatisfactory system of assessment in Dacca was therefore typical of India, rather than unique.

The financial result of the politicization of assessment was that the potential income from the rates was not fully realized. One reason was that prosecution of public works was not of primary concern to the commissioners, so that raising revenue also had a low priority.[114] Another was that behind a proclaimed desire to shield the poor from financial burdens lay an even more lively concern to shield the smaller number of ratepayers, among whom were all the commissioners, many of them substantial property owners.[115] The few were thus spared at the cost of denying to the poor adequate water, lighting and other amenities.

Moreover, from the Municipality's point of view, assessment procedures were made more clumsy and expensive by the variety of appeals to which they were subject. By law, municipalities were required to publish assessments and thereafter to allow within one month appeals against them on the grounds of illegality or unfairness. In many municipalities, dissatisfied ratepayers could appeal to the Small Causes Court and High Court against municipal decisions - or in the Punjab and United Provinces to the District Officer or Divisional Commissioner. In Dacca, the first appeal lay to a municipal committee consisting of the chairman and two other commissioners elected at a municipal meeting, and thereafter to the courts.[116] The appeal apparatus was regularly used by considerable numbers of ratepayers in Dacca, as in other Indian cities. It was tempting to the commissioners therefore to allow old assessments to run on rather than to

create opportunities for a host of appeals - and for much unpopularity and recrimination. The requirement that valuation be revised every five years was accordingly ignored: the 1910 - 11 assessment, indeed, being allowed to stay in force until 1922 - 23. The twin results of such timidity were a static and inadequate income and deteriorating municipal services. Government displeasure was made increasingly evident, as in the summary review in the Bengal Annual Administration Report of 1922 - 23 which roundly declared:

> the state of affairs in the Dacca Municipality is bad. The latrine service is indifferent, the water supply is deficient, and the condition of the roads leaves much to be desired. The revaluation was long overdue and the successive bodies of commissioners who omitted to have the town revalued are partly to blame for the present discomforts of the rate payers. (117)

Such revaluations could have an impressive effect on the Municipality's fortunes. The revaluation of 1910 - 11, for example, resulted in a rise in receipts from Rs 150,715 in 1909 - 10 to Rs 920,128 in the first year of the new assessment.[118]

The decision to revise the 1910 - 11 assessment in 1922 - 23 was taken by Khwaja Nazimuddin, the chairman, under some pressure from the auditor and District Magistrate. It had been opposed at the time by Babu Sitanath Dey Sarkar and a section of the commissioners on the grounds of the prevailing economic distress. When the revaluation was undertaken, those with political ambitions proceeded to exploit popular aversion to higher taxation.[119] Even though there had been an 'insistent demand' for improved municipal services, the raising of the money with which to pay for them met with bitter and widespread opposition.[120] About 17,000 holdings were revalued in 1922 - 23 and no less than 10,065 owners filed objections and appeals. Special committees of municipal commissioners were forced to tackle the case by case review, but nevertheless, at the close of the financial year 1923 - 24, 4,289 appeals still remained to be settled. Not till the following year was this municipal review completed.[121]

Meanwhile, however, certain men of means - and of

political ambition too, it would seem - had challenged the legality of the new assessment. The First Munsiff's verdict was in favour of the Municipality and when an appeal was addressed to the District Judge he too declared the reassessment legal. Nothing daunted, the complainants, led by Bhuban Mohan Bysak and Mohammad Yousuff, then appealed to the High Court.[122] While awaiting its verdict, they launched a door-to-door appeal campaign against the payment of taxes, circulating written appeals among the ratepayers in as many as fifteen different printed leaflets; the already discontented ratepayers were easily won over.[123] To prevent the Municipality from collecting arrears of taxes by issuing distress warrants, the litigants initiated a fresh civil suit for a court order restraining the Municipality. Again, the the District Judge upheld the legality of the Municipality's proceedings, and again the case was then taken to the High Court.[124]

The Municipality suffered severely from all this litigation over its major source of income because the ratepayers refused to pay until the outcome of the legal arguments was known. It was unable to execute distress warrants against defaulters until the High Court at last confirmed that their issue by the Municipality had been perfectly legal: but in the meantime many years had elapsed and the taxes had remained uncollected.[125] In some other cases, the Municipality went so far as to seize the moveables of defaulters, but could not sell any of them as their sale was restrained by orders of injunction from the Munsiff's Court. Nazimuddin reported in 1924 - 25 that this litigation had made it impossible to collect arrears of municipal taxes by attaching properties.[126] The Municipality received a further blow when the government decided to withhold its sanction to the water-works grant and loan until the results of the No-Tax campaign were known. The government relented in 1927 when the Municipality won all its cases in the High Court.[127] Tax collections still did not revive, however, for the protesters chose to carry their case right up to the Privy Council, which passed judgment, wholly in favour of the

Municipality, only in 1929.[128]

The No-Tax campaign which had started in 1923 and only ended with the Privy Council's judgment in 1929 was too nightmarish for the Municipality to forget easily or quickly. The next general revaluation and reassessment of holdings did not take place until 1935 - 36, about twelve years after the previous one. As usual, a large number of objection petitions were received - over 14,000 altogether - and many ratepayers protested vociferously against the revised valuation, accusing the Municipality of exorbitant taxation and illegality. Civil suits against the revaluation were also instituted, and once again the verdicts of the Munsiff and the District Judge went in favour of the Municipality. However, the protesters had also learned their lesson and they accepted the decision of the District Judge: no case was dragged into the High Court this time.[129]

The next general assessment was due in 1946 - 47 and this was taken up in time, though it was stopped in October 1946 on account of the communal disturbances which had started in August and were disrupting all aspects of city life. Work recommenced from April 1947 and was completed about four months after the Partition of India.[130] The long intervals between assessments stunted the Municipality's income, not only from the tax on holdings, but also from water and conservancy rates which were assessed on the basis of the annual rental value assessed on holdings.

Other municipal taxes, such as those on animals and vehicles, on professions and trades, on canals, ferries, markets and pounds, as well as the penalties imposed on defaulters, were easier to levy since the rates at which they were collected were fixed by statute or by municipal regulations approved by the local government. Unlike the hypothetical rents paid to landlords by hypothetical tenants which formed the basis for the tax on holdings, these other taxes were clearly defined and so did not prompt appeals or litigation. Since many of them were comparatively easy to evade, there may also have been less incentive to object: it was certainly easier to hide the fact that a particular

vehicle was used more than twice a week for profit than to claim that a particular holding was unprofitable, unless it was actually vacant. Similarly, in the case of professions and trades, one could without much difficulty underestimate the amount of capital used in a company or the rent paid for its place of business and so cut the tax burden which was directly related to capital and rent.

Since tolls on canals and ferries were often paid by outsiders coming into Dacca to trade - people with no voting power in the Municipality - it was easier to apply toll regulations more rigidly than other taxes, especially as their collection was often leased out to contractors by auction. The check upon enlarging this source was the fear of hampering the trade of Dacca, or even driving it away altogether.

The other considerable source of income was derived from grants and contributions from private individuals and government. These played a distinctive role in the funding of major items of expenditure such as water-works, electric lighting and drainage schemes.[131] But generally speaking, this source of income was not regular and could not be relied upon for any sustained contribution. Indeed, budget estimates and Administration Reports record dramatic fluctuations both of public and private grants during our period and also demonstrate the virtual extinction of private liberality as a source of municipal funds after 1912.[132] The only form in which private generosity, civic spirit and the craving for public recognition found an outlet after that date seems to have been that of making contributions to such works of improvement as street making, repairing or lighting in return for the naming of the street after the donor or some member of his family. Private and state contributions even at their peak were in any case less significant than the receipts from local rates and taxes, as the following table demonstrates:[133]

Year	Percentage of total income derived	
	from rates	from grants & contributions
1900 - 01	74.43	0.13
1920 - 21	26.97	35.32
1925 - 26	77.77	5.78
1926 - 27	46.20	28.36
1930 - 31	84.16	7.14
1938 - 39	84.42	5.68
1940 - 41	76.46	7.49
1946 - 47	74.36	15.42

No rigid factor determined the giving of government grants; usually they were made on the basis of applications received, though some were regularly made to cover requirements imposed upon municipalities such as the pay of the Health Officer or road transport funds. Before making a grant, government was legally obliged to check the records of the Municipality to ensure that, by virtue of its efficient administration, it was a deserving case. Happily, this requirement was leniently interpreted. Neither Dacca nor the other towns of Bengal would otherwise have received many grants.[134]

As income from the rates on holdings, conservancy and water supply provided the bulk of the Municipality's regular revenue, their collection was of especial importance and success in this respect depended largely on the efficiency of the collecting machinery. The financial position of the Municipality was therefore closely connected with the smooth running of the collection department whose task it was to collect rates punctually and in full. The department's organization was entirely the Municipality's responsibility. In charge was a director, chosen by the commissioners from among themselves. He had an assistant who, as well as helping to supervise tax collection, had another important duty: he was the Municipality's cashier, responsible for looking after the revenue collected.[134A]

Below the director and his assistant were the tax collectors, known as sarkars or tahsildars. There were fourteen of these officers in Dacca during the twenties and

thirties, while in the forties their number was raised to twenty-four. In the nineteenth century, sarkars had not been permanent employees of the Municipality but were only recruited when their services were needed. Their main qualification had been popularity with their employers, the municipal Commissioners, whether employed directly or indirectly through contractors. Even when, in the twentieth century, their position was made permanent, they did not receive regular salaries but were paid a percentage of the amount collected by them.[135] The system was intended to inspire the sarkars to a scrupulous collection of the taxes, but the theory only worked if the commission they earned was higher than the tips they might receive from the ratepayers for collecting less than the amounts due. In practice, the accumulated tips seem to have exceeded the commission and so, from 1923 onwards, the sarkars were made salaried officers receiving Rs 25 to Rs 45 per month; in the late thirties, the scale was raised to Rs 30 to Rs 50 per month.[136] The Municipality occasionally employed a few extra sarkars on a temporary basis whenever the commissioners thought the existing number needed to be supplemented - especially after a general revaluation.[137] In addition to the sarkars, there was a large complement of bill clerks in the assessment department who prepared the bills for the ratepayers. This was done under the supervision of the cashier who in Dacca sometimes combined the post with that of secretary as well as chief collector. The overall supervision was provided by a commissioner who was, in Dacca, the vice-chairman ex-officio. The collection department in the twenties also had a miscellaneous tax collector and a licence inspector, with two peons, one jamadar and two distrainers.[138]

In the thirties, the slump and the decline in government grants made full collections particularly vital. The Municipality therefore not only reorganized its departments, bringing together in the collection department the clerks who prepared the bills and those who collected the rates, but strengthened its staff with four assistant sarkars and two new inspectors of collections.[139] As a result there was some

improvement in the proportion of the demand realized as compared with the dismal performance of 1930 - 31, though the efficiency of 1920 - 21 was nowhere near being matched:

Tax on Houses and Lands[140]
(Rupees)

Year	Demand	Collection	Balance
1920 - 21	201,829	185,660	16,169
1930 - 31	357,709	218,547	139,162
1940 - 41	344,800	232,825	111,975

The table demonstrates how inefficient the collection of rates was, perhaps made worse by the great legal battle of the 1920s, combined with the onset of the world depression. Whatever the cause, the fact remains that arrears of taxes mounted up year by year and, throughout the period under review, little was done by the Municipality to recover them. Outstanding arrears were a heavy burden on the Municipality, with a demoralizing effect on its administration. As the estimated income was never collected in practice, the margin between the actual receipts and the arrears constantly widened. Occasionally, the problem became so alarming that the government intervened and warned the Municipality to pull itself together and improve its collections, or else all financial assistance from grants would be stopped. At times, it almost seemed as if government was expected to subsidize the Municipality's mushrooming deficit, and there was a limit to governmental patience. Under such threats, special efforts were made sporadically to bring down the ever-inflating

arrears. The first attempt to deal with the situation was made in 1921 under the chairmanship of Nawab Khwaja Yousuff and its success is reflected both in the table above and that below; in 1920 - 21, he was able to raise the collection to ninety-two per cent. The effect, however, was short-lived, no subsequent chairmen manifesting much alertness towards the collection of taxes. Gradually, the arrears accumulated and, as time went on, much of the sum owed to the Municipality became time-barred - after a certain period, arrears could not legally be collected. In addition, some arrears were written off as the commissioners could not, or would not, find out where the ratepayers were; this used to happen when ratepayers who had changed their jobs left Dacca to work elsewhere, leaving their taxes unpaid. Arrears were sometimes written off on account of the poverty of the ratepayers, as well.[141] Writing off debts was a discretionary power of the commissioners. As they did not have to take government's permission, they used their discretion freely and frequently. Chairman Nawab Khwaja Nazimuddin, for example, reduced the arrears during 1924 - 26 by the simple expedient of writing off a large proportion of them as old and irrecoverable. Though bringing temporary administrative relief, however, this did nothing to tackle the basic problem, which seemed insoluble. Throughout the period under review, as the following table shows, the arrears went up at the slightest relaxation on the part of the board:[142]

Year	Arrears in Rupees
1919 - 20	250,000
1920 - 21	63,000
1922 - 23	244,500
1924 - 25	160,000
1926 - 27	250,000
1930 - 31	300,165
1939 - 40	189,363
1940 - 41	380,990
1943 - 44	800,000
1946 - 47	414,687

Dacca's failure to cope with its dramatically increasing burden of arrears was only typical of municipal performance in India as a whole. Independence did nothing to improve matters, as Azimusshan Haider makes clear:

> collection of rates and taxes has been a vexed job for the civic body [Dacca Municipality] ever since its inception and there has never been an occasion when there was no outstanding demand at the close of the year.
>
> The arrear demand went on inflating through decades and at the close of the financial year 1964 - 65 it stood at a colossal figure of about Rs 87.75 lacs, an amount which is more than 50 per cent of the total estimated receipts for the year 1965 - 66. (143)

Much blame in the period under review was attached to the unscrupulousness of the sarkars and other members of the collecting agency, the level of whose probity seems to have been as low as their salaries. their pay was increased between the twenties and late thirties, but only by Rs 5 per month - less than the rise in the cost of living over the same period.[144] Neither the change from commissioned to salaried service nor the modest rise in wages was sufficient incentive for them to be more virtuous than their predecessors. Indeed, on occasions it was dangerous for sarkars to be too honest in their work. During the Dacca No-Tax campaign of 1922 - 23, for example, the ratepayers' agitation went to such militant

extremes that tax collectors were seriously assaulted by residents in some areas. At the request of the chairman, the District Magistrate arranged with the Superintendent of Police for the sarkars to be escorted on their rounds by constables. The presence of the police overawed the people for a while and collections improved temporarily, but the novelty of the uniformed police escort soon wore off and both police and collectors were beaten up in some districts.[145] Tax collection had always been a costly affair and it was even more expensive to deploy police to assist the sarkars. The practice was stopped when it was found that the police were no more immune from the wrath of militant ratepayers than the sarkars had been.[146]

Legally, however, the commissioners were not helpless at all. If the tax was refused by the ratepayers, the commissioners, with the help of the District Magistrate, could issue a distress warrant for the realization of the demand and ultimately obtain the money by seizing and selling the defaulters' moveable property by public auction.[147] But like other powers, such as the power to raise the scales of taxes, the commissioners used their authority sparingly and seldom went beyond the stage of threats. During the period under review, the issue of distress warrants is recorded but the actual seizure and selling of property is nowhere mentioned in any report. But then, the Municipality could hardly have dared to be overtly coercive of the ordinary ratepayers when some of its most distinguished members, including the vice-chairman, were pilloried in the local press as longstanding defaulters. Moulvi Abul Hasanath had not only served on various municipal boards in Dacca as a commissioner and vice-chairman but he was also a member of the District Board and was well known in the city as a religious and charitable gentleman. It was not poverty that prevented him from paying taxes regularly; he was, in fact, one of the few Indians in Dacca to possess a motor car - a rare display of luxury for a citizen in those days. Nevertheless, both the Moulvi Saheb and his father had large arrears of municipal taxes throughout the period under review. This was possible because of Moulvi Abul Hasanath's position on the municipal board as well as his family's well established social influence in their locality.[148]

Examples of such irresponsibility were not confined to Dacca. Bengal Administration Reports and Proceedings mention many more cases of defaulting commissioners, such as the vice-chairman of Nabadwip Municipality and both the chairman and vice-chairman of Satkhira. By not applying the law conscientiously against defaulting commissioners, the boards necessarily encouraged the ordinary ratepayers to defy municipal rules and regulations with regard to prompt and full payment of taxes.[149]

The Dacca No-Tax campaign of 1922 - 23 brings to light a number of attitudes municipal commissioners adopted towards the payment of taxes. The campaign seriously damaged municipal finances and the Municipality blamed the politically motivated organizers of the campaign. Besides the two leading militant ratepayers mentioned earlier, these included three renegade commissioners who were duly punished by being ousted from the board.[150] Political considerations led the Municipality to blame the No-Tax campaigners rather than the general run of ratepayers (who were, after all, also the voters) for the poor collections during that period. The District Magistrate sympathized with the board and reported that despite their good intentions:

> the Commissioners of the Dacca Municipality were seriously hampered during the year by continued failure to realize the taxes due to a campaign of propaganda and injunctions engineered by an individual who received support and sympathy in his vendetta from a large section of the public instead of the disapproval which it merited. It is evident that not many of the ratepayers realize that the Municipal board is their own creation, - an extension of their own personality; to attack it is suicidal. (151)

The District Magistrate did not need the ratepayers' votes, so he could afford to be bolder in his speech than the commissioners. His reproofs were no doubt justified, but had he not been so anxious to support pro-government moderates in office, he might have turned his attention to those commissioners who set their fellow citizens so ill an example of default. Abul Hasanath came out strongly against the No-Tax campaign, and the District Magistrate backed him up, yet the Examiners of the Local Accounts had strongly objected to the refusal of the Moulvi and his father to pay their

municipal taxes before the No-Tax campaign had started and would do so again after it was over.[152] Under the circumstances, the District Magistrate's noble sounding words ring strangely hollow, while the ordinary ratepayer can scarcely have taken such commissioners very seriously.

The penalties for non-payment were, therefore, ineffective partly because the commissioners did not wish to penalize their own voters or to set precedents which jeopardized their own interests as defaulters.[153] The legal costs and time involved in enforcing the law might well have acted as a further deterrent since the cost of litigation sometimes amounted to more than the unpaid taxes which were being recovered.

For the attitude of mind which forced the Municipality to resort to the law to collect its taxes - and the litigation which then prevented it from attaching properties to recover the arrears - the ratepayers were blamed by Dacca Municipality and rightly so: but for not promptly serving notices to taxpayers and issuing warrants to defaulters, the commissioners themselves were to blame. Moreover, since in most cases the warrant fees were eventually remitted, the less law-abiding ratepayers were almost encouraged to pay their rates long after they were due. The government had pointed out the implications of this to the Bengal municipalities as early as 1922.[154] That the distress warrant system was not in fact as useless as the chairman had argued in 1924 - 25, and that it worked well whenever the Municipality wanted to put it to good use, was proved during the year 1926 - 27. The first three-quarters of the year were disrupted by communal riots; during that period, as the chairman reported, 'not to speak of issuing distress warrant, even ordinary collections had to be stopped for some length of time, like all other business of the city.'[155] But the vigorous employment of warrants in the last three months was enough to produce some remarkably good results. Despite the communal disturbances, the collection rose to Rs 488,380 as against Rs 385,599 in the previous, normal, year; the receipts from taxes on houses and lands had gone up from Rs 182,763 in the previous year to Rs 231,234 in 1926 - 27.[156] The success of 1926 - 27 was repeated in 1927 - 28 when the total collections and recoveries represented 114.3 per cent of the current

demand, despite the recession in the city. Chairman Khwaja Nazimuddin was delighted with the success and explained how the board had achieved it, though, as he said in his report, he had been hoping for even better results:

> I think the percentage would have been higher but for the fact that during the year under report jute fetched a very low price with the result that the business in the city suffered greatly and there was a scarcity of money and great hardship among the poor. Practically every year Government of Bengal's resolution on the working of the Municipalities comments on the bad collection of municipal taxes especially the unwillingness on the part of the Municipal Commissioners to adopt stringent measures for the realisation of taxes ... But the Commissioners of the Dacca Municipality during the year gave moral support to the executive authority in all the measures they took for the collection of taxes. Owing to the circumstances beyond the control of the present Board, huge arrears had accumulated; the municipal commissioners from the very beginning realised that no work can be accomplished and improvements can be effected until ... taxes are realised. They pointed out to the ratepayers that without money it is not possible for the municipality to remove the complaints. The policy adopted by the Commissioners was a vigorous campaign for the realisation of taxes on the one side, on the other as far as the funds would permit, improvement of the civic amenities of the town. In my opinion, the municipal commissioners of Dacca have given practical proof of the true conception of the duties and responsibilities of their position. (157)

The Khwaja went on to give particular praise to Rai Bahadur Keshab Chandra Banerjee, the vice-chairman, who had acted as director of the collection department, and to his assistant, the cashier Lakhshmi Kanta Das, who had worked 'day and night' for the last two months of the financial year. Despite their devotion to duty, the chairman remarked in despair that they were often placed in a most uncomfortable position while the sarkars, who had to face the ratepayers directly, had 'the most unpleasant duty to discharge.'[158]

Similar success had evaded them in 1924 - 25 and 1926 - 27, although the Khwaja and the Rai Bahadur, having formed their board in 1923, had revalued property holdings in the same year; this may be explained as the result of the No-Tax campaign. What success in 1926 - 27 and 1927 - 28 demonstrated was that the common failures in collection owed more to a failure of will than of machinery. Nazimuddin's success was in part prompted by the action of government. After two years of

No-Tax chaos in Dacca, government attitudes hardened and the long-sought grant and loan for the water-works was withheld.[159] Once the Municipality realized that the money would not be forthcoming until the financial situation had improved, it had to take tax collection more seriously. Only after the two successful years, 1926 - 28, were the grants and loan fully sanctioned. It may not be wholly a coincidence that the Municipality's enthusiasm for enforcing collections promptly slackened, so that receipts fell from Rs 453,083 in 1928 - 29 to Rs 227,850 in 1929 - 30 and from 115.3 per cent to 89.9 per cent of the demand, although after the exceptional clearing of arrears in 1927 - 28 some fall was perhaps to be expected. (The board also pointed to sporadic communal rioting in the first half of 1930 and the onset of the world depression as the other factors.)[160] But the more modest achievement of 1929 - 30 may also be connected with the fact that Nazimuddin had by then made his mark as a loyal and effective chairman and had moved to Calcutta and to higher levels of politics.[161]

The importance of political ambition and will to the successful management of municipal affairs may be seen in the careers of Khwaja Nazimuddin's successors as chairman. Even though government repeated the tactics of withholding much needed grants and loans under Satish Chandra Sarkar (1930), Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das (1930 - 33), Rai Satyendra Kumar Das Bahadur (1933 - 38) and Birendra Nath Majumdar (1938 - 40), there was a sharp decline in the efficiency of tax collection which, from 89.5 per cent in 1930 - 31, fell to 71.9 per cent in 1939 - 40 and to an abysmal 51.7 per cent of the total demand in 1940 - 41. Some of the causes for this fall were beyond municipal control, particularly in 1940 - 41 when, as Das explained, 'the unfortunate communal disturbances that broke out in the city during the last half of March 1941', the peak period for tax collection, caused what he described as a 'total collapse'.[162] The Municipality had to take an overdraft of one lakh rupees from the Imperial Bank to overcome its short-term difficulties and to abandon all capital works.[163] Even this proved inadequate and Das, in a desperate position, was forced

to appeal to the government for a further loan of one lakh of rupees. More dramatic still was his unprecedented action of making a formal request to the tax-dodgers among the municipal commissioners to pay off their arrears and push up collections 'so that on seeing the sincere effort the District Magistrate may recommend the proposed advance from the Government'.[164] This appeal was underscored by the District Magistrate in 1943 when at a municipal meeting he blamed the eight lakh rupees of arrears upon the lack of genuine effort by the board to collect, even from defaulters who were known to be men of means. Without more serious action by the board, he said, he would be unable 'to approach the Government with a clear conscience for accomodating the Municipality with the temporary loan asked for'.[165] But with Dacca torn by frequent communal riots, the Municipality had only managed to halve its deficit to some four lakhs of rupees by the time of partition and independence,[166] and in November 1947 it was superseded by the new Government of Pakistan for inefficiency and insolvency.[167]

As has been shown, the administration of taxes was never a strong point in Dacca, as in many other Indian municipalities.[168] Yet in the mid-forties, some 68 per cent of Indian municipal income came from rates and taxes, with the rest provided by government grants and loans. It was a major handicap therefore that the level of rate and tax demand was so low - and that this low demand was far from being fully realized. In India as a whole, the municipal tax burden on the ratepayer averaged Rs. 3 per year in 1911 - 14 and Rs 5 in 1922 - 25. The combined tax income of all Indian local authorities, urban and rural, was no more than that of the London County Council. This was a measure of Indian poverty, the Indian being only an eighth of the English per capita income, but also of a more specific local authority poverty, the weight of local taxation in India being only 1/124th of that in the United Kingdom.[169]

The maldistribution of resources between the municipalities and the provincial and central government was an important

cause of this municipal poverty. In America and Britain, local authority expenditure was only about 54 and 33 per cent of the total national expenditure: in India it was no more than 20 per cent. As M.P. Sharma notes, 'This means that the higher governmental authorities have appropriated to themselves some of those sources of revenue and objects of expenditure, which in other countries are entrusted to local bodies'. [170]

Moreover, this was not counterbalanced by municipal involvement in profitable business enterprises, such as was common in America or Britain. Many services, such as conservancy, were obviously not self-supporting but in India even those which in the West did yield a profit - water or electricity supply, for example - were organized in principle to be self-sustaining, but in practice were often not even that.[171] For such enterprises, as for the work of urban renewal through Improvement Trusts, moreover, funds were not normally borrowed in India, as they were in Europe, upon the rents and revenues of the municipalities, either from government or private sources. This is still the case. Sharma wrote in 1960:

> Total local debt in England is more than 60 times of that in India. The purpose of local loans in India is connected with only two or three objects, namely water supply, drainage, roads and markets. Here we have no loans for education, hospitals, etc., and very few for housing or town-planning schemes. (172)

The resources of most Indian municipalities were thus very meagre, and Dacca was no exception. With an incidence of municipal taxation of about Rs 4 per head and a fast growing population, few of whom were ratepayers, Dacca had little to spend on essential services. As the following tables show, though the proportion of ratepayers in the population did ultimately grow and the taxes they had to pay rose steadily, the size of the Municipality which had to be serviced was growing too. In four out of the five years quoted, the Municipality incurred a deficit:

Year	Number of people in municipal area	Percentage of ratepayers to population	Incidence of municipal taxation per ratepayer[173]
1901	90,000	13.8	Rs 2
1911	109,000	11.9	Rs 3
1921	119,000	10.36	Rs 4
1931	139,000	12.4	Rs 5
1941	213,000	19	Rs 5

Year	Income (Rupees)	Expenditure (Rupees)	Balance[174] (Rupees)
1901	190,936	192,742	- 1,806
1911	305,159	453,716	-148,557
1921	777,867	496,414	+281,453
1931	460,568	637,419	-176,851
1941	640,097	691,865	- 51,768

The trends illustrated in these tables are clear, though the figures cannot claim a great degree of accuracy, and the one good budgetary year, 1921, proves on closer inspection to be anomalous. It was, on the income side, the year when Khwaja Yousuff, under strong government pressure, took particular pains over the collection of receipts, while, on the expenditure side, large sums planned for waterworks and sewerage projects were not spent and some of the contractors' bills for the building of the Malitola Girls' School remained unpaid. There was even a saving on the salary of the secretary, who was also the Municipal Engineer, and who had not been immediately replaced following his resignation.[175] Over the forty years from 1901 onwards, income had more than trebled - but expenditure had risen still faster. There were many services and amenities, even so, which the Dacca Municipality failed to supply adequately, but bridging the gap between the necessary or desirable and the financially feasible was impossible from the unaided resources of the city.[176] The Municipality carried a heavy burden of responsibility but for Dacca even to maintain the most basic services, such as water supply, electricity and conservancy, was beyond its

means. It was driven therefore to raise loans - and to look to government to help it out.

This was true even though the municipal commissioners, in their departmental sub-committees and in the board as a whole, had a statutory obligation to prepare each year an itemized budget of income and expenditure.[177] Over this, government had extensive supervisory powers.[178] When in Dacca the municipal secretary had framed the annual budget, in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman and the Finance Committee, it had to be submitted for sanction to the local authority, the provincial government, or both. Thus the budget went first to the Divisional Commissioner for comment and approval (although there is no record, in this period at least, of any budget being officially disallowed and returned by the Divisional Commissioner). It was then forwarded for a much more prolonged scrutiny by the Bengal Government.[179]

The vetting process was extremely protracted. One copy of the budget had to go to the Director of Public Instruction to ensure that the legal minimum of 3.2 per cent of the total expenditure was applied to education.[180] There were other statutory obligations to be fulfilled, such as the requirement that the servicing and repayment of loans should be a first charge upon municipal resources, and the discharging of 'liabilities and obligations arising from any trust legally imposed upon or accepted by the commissioners' was to be a second charge.[181] The latter priority became effective only after the Act of 1932 had been extended to Dacca. The third priority was expenditure on municipal establishments under the direction of the local government, while the fourth was to pay the cost of audit, or of any assessor or other special officer appointed by government, together with due contributions to 'the pension, gratuities, and allowances of any servant whose services are lent or transferred by Government to the Commissioners'.[182] Before 1920, there had had been further detailed financial restrictions, as for instance the requirement that the

Divisional Commissioner's approval must be secured for any appointment with a salary of over Rs 50 a month or for any salary increase to over Rs 200 a month,[183] but this control was much relaxed when under dyarchy local self-government became a transferred subject. The municipalities thereafter, Tinker argues, obtained 'almost complete independence in the sphere of expenditure of public money'.[183A] However, the municipal commissioners in practice enjoyed considerable freedom , being able, even before dyarchy, to vary a budget, by special resolution, after it had received government sanction.[184] There was also an obligation to provide for conservancy, water and lighting, though this was not quantified as a set proportion of expenditure as was the case with education. As an elected body, the Dacca Municipality regularly chose to take the risk of some overspending rather than to curtail popular services out of financial caution.

Though there was no fixed departmental expenditure policy, a pattern did emerge in Dacca for the whole period. In this, public health occupies the most important position, the major items being conservancy and water supply, with public works close behind. The following table shows the percentage of total expenditure incurred on the principal items in the Dacca Municipality's budgets from 1901 to 1947:[185]

Year	Conservancy	Water Supply	Public Works	General Establishment	Lighting	Drainage	Education	Medical	Vaccination	Other Heads
1901	36.1	11.5	13.3	10.6	3.7	2.6	1.2	10.2	0.3	10.5
1921	27.3	9.0	10.9	4.4	6.1	8.6	2.3	2.2	0.3	28.9
1931	31.6	17.7	8.2	7.4	8.3	4.8	4.4	2.3	0.5	14.8
1941	31.7	11.0	12.3	10.8	8.1	4.4	7.1	2.6	0.5	11.5
1947	39.0	13.9	10.0	12.7	1.4	5.8	5.6	1.8	0.5	9.3

The most obvious reason, perhaps, for the larger share taken by conservancy, water supply and public works is that these were government approved items and ones for which generous government grants and loans were available. They were also headings in which individual items of expenditure were often large and bulky - whereas small, discrete items like the occasional lamp post could easily be added to or subtracted from the total lighting budget, water-works or electricity supply stations were either bought as large, indivisible packages or not at all. Lighting, drainage, education or medical provision by contrast were comparatively minor items although, from the 1930s, lighting did become a more significant element in the budget as electric lights came to replace oil lamps, and as the impact of Nawab Ahsanullah's donation at the beginning of the century, which yielded Rs 7,200 per year, was swallowed up in the constantly expanding costs of the enlarged service.[186] On the whole, lighting tended not to be highly regarded by the public who regarded it as less important than pure water, for example, which was a boon welcomed by everyone. Dacca, like many smaller Indian cities, wound up its business before nightfall. Apart from the Gymkhana Club, the cinemas, hospitals, police stations and the red light area, few places were open at night. The homeless beggars who slept in the verandas of accessible buildings, public or private, had no say in the improvement of the city - assuming they ever strongly felt the need for such an amenity as street lighting. Thieves and visitors to brothels had no wish to be seen and hid themselves from the light as much as possible. The cinema-goers and the Europeans had little to complain of as the main streets were amply lit. The only people who needed lights in the streets and alleys were the police: but their demand, if any, was evidently not loud enough to persuade the Municipality to spend more on lights than they did. Since they levied no rate for lighting, the Municipality kept their outlay to a minimum, employing a handful of light sarkars to look after the oil lamps where these were still used in the inner recesses of the old city, or relying upon contractors to do the job,

while just two lighting inspectors - on Rs 25 a month each plus cycle allowances of Rs 5 a month to increase their mobility - were employed to oversee the electric lights provided by the Electricity Supply Company.[187] In the forties, as the city grew and electric lighting progressively replaced oil, the municipal staff rose to three, provided with the incentive of a graded salary structure: they received Rs 40, Rs 31 and Rs 28 per month in 1941.[188] The board never felt sufficiently strongly to amend the agreement under which electricity was supplied to enable them to impose a rate, and their appeals to the Divisional Commissioner, as President of the Electricity Trust, for enlarged contributions were never answered, although the municipal chairman pointed out that by the thirties the cost of the service had risen fourfold since the beginning of the century; it had risen fivefold by the forties.[189] The service was never self-supporting, nor even near enough to being so to allow plans to be laid for any radical expansion.

Indeed, by the end of the period the service was in crisis. The extension of street lighting to meet the city's growth had had to be met from the general funds of the Municipality since the revenue from the Nawab's light trust was static at Rs 7,200 per year. The gap between income and expenditure was bridged by loans - but also by not regularly paying the Electricity Company's bills. The climax came in 1941 when the Municipality accused the Company of overcharging and the Company retaliated by refusing to supply current until the bills had been paid. At the municipal chairman's request, the Divisional Commissioner intervened and the crisis was averted when the Municipality promised to pay the bills in instalments out of the loans.[190] The following table shows the widening margin between income and expenditure on lighting in Dacca:[191]

Year	Income	Expenditure	Deficit
1911	Rs 8,700	Rs 13,000	Rs 4,300
1921	9,200	30,500	21,300
1931	8,500	49,300	40,800
1941	10,200	50,100	39,900
1947	8,200	13,822	5,622

1946 - 47 was an exceptional year, in which communal riots prevented lighting, along with other services from functioning fully. In addition, the unusual political excitment may also have considerably reduced the administrative zeal of the municipal commissioners.[192]

Of the other non-rateable services, education was one of the most important. But even at primary level, it was not so much a municipal as a government responsibility, and one which under dyarchy and afterwards received the enthusiastic interest and financial backing of Indian ministers. The role of government grants in the funding of primary schools maintained by the Municipality and of such aided and special institutions as tols, madrassahs, orphanage schools and the Sanskrit College is brought out by the following table:[193]

	1921	1931	1941
No. of maintained primary schools	2	3	28
No. of aided primary schools	44	81	65
No. of special institutions	6	7	7
Government grants	Rs 6,438	Rs 12,786	Rs 13,565
Total expenditure	Rs 11,482	Rs 26,402	Rs 43,716

Under the new Indian ministers, in a hopeful financial climate, the grants in the 1920s were generous - nearly half the total expenditure. From the 1930s, the effects of the Depression were felt; government aid scarcely increased while total municipal outlay rose steadily, the fall in the

number of aided schools being more than counterbalanced by the growth of maintained schools.[194]

Although more resources were being devoted towards education, it does not necessarily follow that standards were also rising. Teachers continued to be miserably paid[195] and well qualified people were not attracted to the profession. There was in addition considerable suspicion about the way in which individual salaries in municipal schools were arrived at. The Education Committee of the board - in Dacca usually four or five members under the chairman or vice-chairman - did not have to submit their budget to the Director of Public Instruction for approval, and it was widely believed that the Committee's patronage was misused for personal, family and factional purposes.[196] In 1941 for example, the salaries of the headmasters of the Kazi Abdul Hamid, Baxi Bazar and Mahuttuly primary schools were Rs 31, Rs 45 and Rs 65 per month respectively, a range for which there is no explanation given in the municipal record.[197] Doubt about the disinterestedness of the Committee's choice of the educational institutions it would aid and the level of aid to be granted must also remain while no explanation is forthcoming of the reasons for its decisions.

The improvement of public health was at least as necessary in India as the growth of education, and like education it was a task the municipalities shared with the provincial governments, the latter providing hospital management and medical care while the municipalities looked to preventive measures - vaccination, sanitation and conservancy, and health education, as well as improvements to water supply and drainage. But whereas in Bengal education was a service much demanded by the people, sanitary and other preventive measures were never politically popular. So while municipal spending on education increased nearly fourfold between 1921 and 1941, that on health and sanitation went up only from Rs 22,659 to Rs 39,713 in the two decades 1921 to 1941.[198]

	Expenditure (Rupees)		
	1921	1931	1941
Charge on account of Health Officer and Sanitary Inspectors	8,161	12,929	13,257
Contributions to Mitford Hospital and Dispensaries	11,120	13,978	16,048
Other sanitary requirements - eg clearing markets, burning adulterated foodstuffs, clearing jungle etc.	1,840	3,500	6,974
Vaccination	1,538	2,729	3,434
Total	22,659	33,136	39,713

Over this period there was an increase in the number of charitable dispensaries and in the outlay on vaccination, but a considerable item was formed by the salaries of the sanitary inspectors and the Health Officer (who, with the Municipal Engineer, was the most highly paid officer in Dacca Municipality). Their salaries were a compulsory charge upon the municipal authorities. There was in addition an increase in their office staff.[199]

Expenditure on conservancy, drainage and water supply does not show the same constant upward tendency as that on education or health. This is largely due to the fact that drainage or water works schemes tend to come in large, occasional blocks rather than by small gradual increments, often stimulated - or delayed - by the availablity or otherwise of loans or grants from government:[200]

	Expenditure			Average
Year	Conservancy	Drainage	Water supply	daily supply
1921	Rs 135,935	Rs 43,064	Rs 45,160	1,229,717 gals
1931	125,217	28,788	104,233	1,878,758
1941	195,697	27,480	68,015	2,050,000

Thus the large figures for drainage in 1921 and water supply in 1931 represent the construction of underground sewerage and a large increment in the water supply from an increased number of hydrants.[201] The fall in the sum spent on conservancy from Rs 135,935 in 1921 to Rs 125,217 in 1931 is similarly accounted for by the grant-aided purchase, as a 'one-off' development, of land for a dumping depot costing Rs 26,680 in 1921.[202] There were also minor yearly fluctuations which often reflected the vagaries of the weather - directly affecting the cost of fodder for conservancy bullocks or the silting up of drains, for example.[203] If the figures of income under the heads of conservancy and water are examined, however, these show a steady growth in the twenty years 1921 to 1941 since they were based on the growth in the numbers of houses reached by the municipal services and liable therefore to rates under the two heads - the comparatively large jump in water receipts is clearly a reflection of the increased daily water supplies to the city already noted (see table below). Expenditure under the heading of public works did show a fall when the recession began to bite, but there too it was impossible to mask an underlying expansion to keep pace with city growth and the rising burden of maintenance as services were expanded expenditure increased from Rs 54,279 in 1921 to Rs 48, 742 in 1931, to Rs 75,995 in 1941.[204]

To meet these charges, the Municipality imposed rates, but only in respect of conservancy and water supply. Even for these two items, the revenue was often inadequate:[205]

	Conservancy		Water supply	
Year	Income (Rupees)	Expenditure (Rupees)	Income (Rupees)	Expenditure (Rupees)
1921	117,390	135,935	61,992	45,160
1931	133,023	125,217	91,743	104,233
1941	148,212	195,697	93,470	68,015

The shortfall could sometimes be properly attributed to external forces, such as the communal riots in 1941 and the impact of war. It had then to be made good by transferring money from other heads, by borrowing or, as in the case of

water supply in 1941, by simply not paying the bills as they became due.[206] But often the imbalance was the result of careless or unrealistic budgeting by the Finance Committee. The budget proposals were always submitted to the Divisional Commissioner for sanction, but since on paper the estimates were properly balanced, that sanction was not refused. The real income often fell short of the estimates, however, and on the expenditure side adequate provision against rising prices was frequently not accompanied, as has been seen, by any improvement in the efficiency of tax collection.[207] Nor, similarly, was there any obvious improvement in the board's management of debt. A large item in most budgets was provision for the repayment of government loans, which by law had first claim upon the city's revenues. Failure to budget for these debts could increase the burden, for there were penalty clauses attached to all government loans which raised the interest payable when the board fell into arrears. In this situation, new loans had often to be raised to clear earlier deficits, as occurred in 1921 when an outstanding water works loan was paid off, under pressure from the Divisional Commissioner, in part by borrowing a further Rs 15,165 from government at a rate higher than was then current in the open market. The new loan was ostensibly to improve the city's water supply; fortunately, exceptionally good collections in 1920 - 21 enabled the money to be paid off promptly.[208] A similar 'water supply' loan of Rs 40,000 was taken in 1930 - 31, but was used in reality to repay Rs 20,408 interest and Rs 20,506 capital of earlier loans. Even so, the outstanding municipal debt was Rs 336,099 at the end of the year.[209] Yet in that same year, no less than Rs 37,944 had been paid out in advances of salaries and other loans to members of the municipal staff[210] - an amount sufficient to have paid off eleven per cent of the total debt outstanding. The advances were often allowed to run on slackly and not infrequently had to be written off as irrecoverable. The main excuse was that without the advances, low-paid employees could not have survived, the sweeper force

especially, and they would have had to resort to the strike weapon against the board and the citizens of Dacca.[211]

The clerical staff of the Municipality was considerably strengthened during the period under review, rising from 21 in 1927 - 28 to 34 by 1941 - 42.[212] Most were employed in the financial departments but their efficiency appears not to have been proportionate to their numbers. The reports of the auditors and examiners of local accounts regularly give a picture of a Municipality in which the accounts were not properly supervised, the rules were not strictly followed because of the ignorance or carelessness of the commissioners and the executive, and revenue was lost or wasted because of slack and inefficient administration. The auditors were supposed to audit the accounts of the municipalities every year. The auditors' notes were then to be 'returned to the examiner of Local Accounts within three months of their receipt, with the chairman's explanation,' but in practice this time limit was seldom observed by the Dacca Municipality.[213] This was true of other municipalities also,[214] but Dacca showed itself remarkably adept at ignoring the enquiries of the Examiner of Local Accounts - as in 1926 - 27 and 1927 - 28, when it blandly refused to explain why it had the largest closing balances in all Bengal.[215]

An unexpended surplus might not seem too serious a matter but from time to time other and grave financial irregularities in Dacca's municipal administration were reported by the examiners and auditors. Reference has already been made to one of them, the paying of salaries in advance and leaving such payments long unadjusted. This habit was clearly subject to abuse, especially when fresh advances were made before earlier ones had been repaid.[216] Slackness in recoveries in this sphere was matched elsewhere, as in the failure to follow up decrees for rates and dues outstanding, and in the neglect by the executive of its duty to revise the municipal registers - a task either not performed or done without due care.[217]

Although very few cases of embezzlement were actually reported, misappropriation of municipal funds, frauds and

robbery had taken place. A robbery case in 1931 and defalcation of money in Yousuff Market in 1939 may be mentioned as examples. In the case of the robbery, which took place on 1 August 1931, Rs 6,202 - 4 annas were reported to have been carried off, a reflection of the inefficient system of municipal security and of negligence in leaving so much money in the municipal office. The culprits were never caught and the commissioners decided to write off the amount.[218] The defalcation of money in the Yousuff Market is more revealing of real failure. The case, considered to be 'of great importance to the rate payers of the city,' brought the sloppy, even corrupt, administration of the Municipality fully to the public's notice. The District Magistrate wrote to the Divisional Commissioner on 27 September 1939 that the incident clearly showed how badly the affairs of 'a great self governing institution like the Dacca Municipality' were carried out by some of its officers working under the supervision of the elected representatives of the citizens. On 11 October 1938, Babu Manindra Kumar Sur, secretary of the Municipality, sent a written complaint alleging that the rent collector of the Yousuff Municipal Market had defalcated Rs 1,236 - 9 out of the rent realized by him from the permanent stall keepers of the Market and had absconded. The letter was forwarded to the Kotwali Police Station for action, and 'after a very laborious and painstaking enquiry conducted by S.I. /Sub Inspector/ Mohammad Newaz-Ali, a charge sheet was submitted on 16 August 1939 under section 408 I.P.C. /Indian Penal Code/ in respect of a sum of money amounting to Rs 2,314/14/3 embezzled between the month of October 1937 and 18 September 1938.'[219]

The fugitive, Abul Kasem, was soon caught and in the Magistrate's Court he pleaded guilty to the charge. However, he also made a long statement declaring that the idea of cheating the Municipality would not have occurred to him had he not been instigated by two of his superior officers. These two officers, who had regularly shared his embezzled proceeds from the Market, were Manindra Kumar Sur, the secretary, and Lakhshmi Kanta, the cashier of the Municipality.[220]

At the trial it appeared that the accused was first appointed by the municipal board as a light inspector on 16 January 1931 - an appointment that seems to have turned upon his being step-brother of Khan Saheb Moulvi Abul Hasanath, then the vice-chairman, rather than upon any other qualification. In September 1932, he was promoted to be inspector of the Yousuff Market, a post with the higher salary of Rs 30 to Rs 45 a month and much greater opportunities for influencing people. 'It is somewhat curious to find', remarked the Magistrate, 'that though the accused was placed in sole charge of collection of rent of a market, amounting to several thousand rupees per annum, he was called upon to furnish security to the extent of only Rs 50/-'. [221]

As market inspector, Abul Kasem had the responsibility of collecting rent from the storeholders and of submitting carbon copies of the receipts to the cashier, together with the money collected. According to the cashier, he seldom followed these regulations. This was certainly unfortunate since, so the secretary deposed, he had been asked to keep a 'watchful eye' on Abul Kasem by the vice-chairman who had some suspicion of his step-brother and feared his 'reckless behaviour'. Neither the noting of irregularities by the cashier nor the warning to the secretary from the Khan Saheb served to prevent the crime. 'To the credit of Khan Saheb, I should say', remarked the Magistrate:

> that, though the accused is his step brother, he made no attempts, so far as I can see, in hushing up the matter and, I believe, he rendered all possible help in the enquiry. His supicion should, however, have been roused long ago and, if he had been more vigilant, the Municipality would have been saved from the defalcation of a large sum of money.

As it was, he continued:

> the system of accounting prevailing at the time and the utter laxity of supervision have given the accused good scope in defalcating public money, which I am told, amounts to more than Rs 7,000/- as actually detected, though the charge had to be framed in respect of defalcation extending for one year. ... With the help of the Secretary and the Cashier, the accused had been defalcating public money for a number of years. (222)

Indeed, the accused had 'been treating the public market

as his personal zamindari property for a considerable number of years'. The Magistrate believed that 'Some surprise visits and inspection would easily have put a stop to the systematic defalcation'. [222A]

According to the District Magistrate's report, the immediate cause of secretary Manindra Kumar's report to the police against the market inspector was not his troubled conscience but his fear. In June 1938, Babu Birendra Nath Majumdar became chairman of the Municipality. He had the reputation of being a strict man and so the secretary, alarmed at the prospect of being caught out, promptly denounced Abul Kasem to the police.[223] Secretaries and other municipal officers had little security of tenure, as Tinker has noted, and were often used by faction leaders in the municipalities as their political agents and instruments.[224] In this case, Manindra Kumar Sur owed his appointment to the group led by the outgoing chairman and vice-chairman and he could expect that any serious irregularity on his part would be readily utilized by the new chairman as a lever with which to ease him out. His only hope was to forestall discovery and if possible clear himself by throwing the blame on Abul Kasem.

This is what in fact happened. Abul Kasem alone was found guilty, the Court deciding there was not enough evidence to convict either the secretary or the cashier, both of whom were still in office at the end of the period under review. What is more, thanks to the early death of the strict man, Birendra Nath, in a train accident before the case was closed, Moulvi Abul Hasanath did not lose his vice-chairmanship, for he continued to serve under the new chairman, Satyendra Kumar Das.[225] As it turned out, therefore, the neat arrangement for embezzling market funds need never have been disturbed after all.

Corruption, perhaps inevitable where a complex system involving innumerable small transactions was worked by an often ill-paid and ill-educated staff, made the municipal administration less efficient. The major problem was really that of poverty, however, for though the population of Dacca grew steadily in this period, the proportion of rate-

payers remained very small. Administrators drawn from the ranks of these rate payers, by whose votes they were elected, were unlikely to press too hard on them. Instead they took the easy way out and chose wherever possible to appeal to the government for help, something which they had always done and which they certainly did during the period under review. In the addresses of welcome given by the Municipality to various visiting dignitaries, the cry for more and more financial help became ever louder and clearer.[226] This importunate attitude of the Municipality of Dacca, generally disliked by the government, drew the vigorous condemnation of the last British District Magistrate, T. John, who wrote in 1947:

> A perusal of the general remarks of the Chairman shows up once again the besetting sin of Bengal Municipal Administration. From beginning to end the remarks are a plea for charity and call for help from the four corners of the earth. It would be far more pleasant to see the Municipality of the capital of a newly created country talking about the schemes that it is determined to see through out of its own resources. (227)

But the preceding discussion on the resources and expenditure of the Municipality makes it clear that seeing through any big scheme out of its own resources would have been a utopian ambition for it. It is true that better financial administration could have improved those resources. But it was not just because the administration was lax - dishonest on occasions - and some rate payers did not take paying taxes seriously that this self governing institution failed to prove a spectacular success either in Dacca or elsewhere in Bengal. Poverty of resource was matched by a poverty of political will - or rather of a political will to make the improvement of the civic life of Dacca its prime concern.

Notes and References

1. Saran, 308. Saran does not make it clear whether each transaction had to be sanctioned by the central government, or whether it exercised only general control.
2. For details see Saran, 308, 384 - 407.
3. S.U. Ahmed in South Asia, 129; Saran, 158, 332, 333, 384-95.
4. Saran, 392.
5. Ibid. Walls, tanks, reservoirs and bhisties were sometimes provided by communal and individual efforts. For further accounts of the role of charity in India, see also Earl of Ronaldshay, India: A Bird's-eye-view (London, 1924), 146 - 148; G.L. Pophale, A Quarter Century of Direct Taxation in India, 1939 - 1964 (Bombay, 1965), 1 - 2.
6. Neither Saran nor Misra is clear on the point of whether or not house taxes were paid by the city dwellers to the chaukidars for their services and, if such taxes were paid, whether they were voluntary. See Misra, Administrative History, 592 - 593.
7. Misra, Administrative History, 594.
8. Tinker, The Foundations, 28.

8A. Ibid., 28 - 29.

9. Misra, Administrative History, 595. In urban areas the assessments were made by local elites who might have been called 'Murubbis,' 'Dalpatis' or 'Panchayats' in Bengal.
10. S.U. Ahmed, in his thesis on nineteenth century Dacca, mentioned that the chaukidars were appointed by the panchayats in Dacca. But he was not clear whether the assessments were made by them as well. See S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 266.
11. Misra, Administrative History, 596.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid. See also Tinker, The Foundations, 36.
14. See Misra, Administrative History, 598; Abhijit Datta, 'Municipal Administration in West Bengal', in A. Avasthi (ed.), Municipal Administration in India (Agra, 1972), 398 (hereafter Municipal India).
15. See for details Haider in A City, 92, and S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 252 - 276, 281. Haider mentioned that the town duties were abolished in 1834 in Dacca. But from the 1850s the Municipality started to receive some revenue from the rents of a market called Committee Bazar. See also J.N. Sil and L. Johnson, 'An Account of the Dacca Municipal Committee' (Dacca, 1893 - Manuscript).
16. S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 282. Many people already felt overburdened with income tax and chaukidari tax.
17. Tinker, The Foundations, 162.
18. The increase in house tax coupled with occasional reassessments increased income for the time being. See for details S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 269 - 281.
19. Ibid., 304.
20. Haider in A City, 106; S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 319.
21. Quoted in Haider in A City, 107.
22. Ibid.

22A. The heads of expenditure mentioned in the budget for 1874 - 75 included establishment, conservancy, police, roads and works of public utility. See Haider in A City, 106.

23. S.U. Ahmed, 'The History', 332 - 334.
24. See pp. 93-94 in the municipal services chapter.
25. Such grants were meagre during the post-Mutiny financial crisis.
26. The Municipality's first election was held on 24 Nov. 1884. See S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 398 and 401.
27. Quoted in Haider in A City, 106.
28. For the financial problems of Dacca Municipality from its creation up to 1965 see Haider in A City, 103 - 108.
29. A.A.R.D.M., 1910 - 11, 2.
30. See Tinker, The Foundations, 314.
31. Kailash Chandra Ghosh, the vice-chairman of Dacca Municipality, was reluctant in 1883 to recommend any increase in direct taxation on the grounds of its being 'impolitic,' although his seat in the Municipality did not depend on ratepayers' votes. Nevertheless, he must have been afraid of ratepayers' criticism. See S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 282 - 283.
32. Sir Henry Sharp, Good-Bye India (London, 1946), 119.
33. This is a basic requirement in any democratic system. But local self-government in India in the nineteenth century was hardly democratic and the commissioners rarely represented their electors.
34. See Bengal Municipal Act, 1884, Act III, part IV, sec. 86, p. 36 (hereafter The Act III of 1884). See also Haider in A City, 107.
35. Tinker, The Foundations, 121, 308.
36. Ibid., 308.
37. Ibid.
38. For various services provided by the Municipality see the chapter on municipal services.
39. Tinker, The Foundations, 62.
40. A.A.R.D.M., 1910 - 11, 7.
41. Tinker, The Foundations, 90.
42. See the previous chapter, pp. 72, 73, 102.
43. Tinker, The Foundations, 310.
44. Ibid., 311.
45. Ibid. Dacca Municipality was not a newly created popular board under dyarchy. It had been used to elections and the management of the administration by elected commissioners since 1884. Therefore, the new atmosphere of freedom from government interference did not affect it dramatically.
46. Tinker, The Foundations, 312.
47. A.A.R.D.M., 1900-01, 4; 1910-11, 7; 1920-21, 4; 1926-27, 6. Corresponding figures are Rs 250 in 1900-01, Rs 131,211 in 1910-11.
48. Tinker, The Foundations, 121.
49. For Bombay see ibid., 121-2. The fast growth of population in Dacca city can be seen in the table on p. 26 in the first chapter of this thesis. The market value of land in Dacca was also increasing. In Nawabpur one acre of land cost Rs 30,000 in 1920 - 21 but rose to Rs 60,000 in 1933 - 34; it had, however, fallen to Rs 50,000 by 1940 - 41. See Land Revenue and Settlement Department, Pargana Jahangir Nagar, Tauzi no. 8389, Paper (A), 1940 - 41, 14.

50. A.A.R.D.M., 1918 - 19, 2; 1926 - 27, 6.
51. All these figures exclude opening balances. A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 4; 1910 - 11, 8 ; 1920 - 21, 4; 1926 - 27, 6. A.A.R.D.M.,1920 - 21 gives figures for 1919 - 20 also and A.A.R.D.M.,1926 - 27 gives figures for 1925 - 26 as well.
52. See Tinker, The Foundations, 163 - 164.
53. But there are exceptions to this picture. For instance, in the United Provinces octroi and terminal tax returns showed a downward movement during 1930 - 31, whereas in Bombay returns from these items continued to rise. See Tinker, The Foundations, 163.
54. A.A.R.D.M., 1926 - 27, 6; 1930 - 31, 7.
55. Tinker, The Foundations, 163.
56. In Dacca, the recession and communal riots began at about the same time and badly affected the Municipality's tax collection in 1930 - 31. See A.A.R.D.M., 1930 - 31, 2.
57. See Bengal Municipal Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, sec. 124, p. 60 (hereafter The Act XV of 1932).
58. Ibid., 61.
59. The conservancy rate was not affected by the Act XV of 1932 and remained at 6¼ per cent as earlier fixed by the Municipality. Dacca Municipality did not attempt to raise the rate before Partition.
60. See the Act XV of 1932, Schedule III, p. 239. Both the 1884 and 1932 Acts allowed the municipalities to tax the animals as follows:

	1884 Per Quarter		1932 Per Quarter	
	Rs	As	Rs	As
For every horse	2	0	3	0
For every pony, mule and donkey	0	12	1	8
For every elephant	6	0	9	0
For every camel	2	0	4	0

See the Act III of 1884, Schedule V, p. 133 and the Act XV of 1932, Schedule III, p. 239.
61. The Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, sec. 123, p. 60.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., sec. 202, p. 84.
64. Ibid., sec. 213, p. 87 and sec. 214, p. 87.
65. Tinker, The Foundations, 338 - 339.
66. The Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, sec. 156, p. 73.
67. Ibid., sec. 160, p. 74.
68. Ibid., sec. 162, p. 75.
69. See Tinker, The Foundations, 308.
70. See the Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, sec. 184, p. 80 and sec. 189, p. 81.
71. Ibid., sec. 191, p. 82.
72. The Act III of 1884, Schedule V, p. 133; see also the Act XV of 1932, Schedule III, p. 239.
73. The Act XV of 1932, Schedule V, p. 239.
74. Thacker's Indian Directories recorded a number of companies and firms existing in the city. For example:

Bank of Dacca Ltd; Alexandra Steam Machine Press (printers, etc.); Albert Library and Publishers; Ananda Mohan Krishnalal and Co. (manufacturers and dealers in clothes); S.N. Basak and Sons (metal button manufacturers); J. Banik and Co. (cloth merchants and order supplier); Cash and Co. (stationers and order suppliers); Coronation Button Manufacturing Co.; R.N. Das and Co. (crushed food and forage contractors etc.); P.B. Dass, Brokers; Dina Nath Roy Builders, Contractors (and also hardware merchants); Eastern Trading Company (manufacturers of hosiery); Gour Chandra Das and Co. (hardware and timber merchants); Indian Commercial Syndicate Factory (manufacturers of vegetable and chemical dyes, buttons, combs, paints, varnish and ink); Kohinoor Medical Hall (chemists and druggists); Nandalal and Anantalal Shaha and Co. (general merchants, contractors, dealers in coal, paint, varnish, etc.); K.G. Roy Choudhury and Co. (jute merchants); K.G. Shaha and Co. (jute baling); Kundu Pal and Co. (dealers in rice, salt oil, piece goods, etc.). There were in addition many other companies and factories in Dacca. See Thacker's Indian Directory, 1921 (Mofussil Section), 123 - 124; 1924 (Mofussil Section), 113 - 114. Other enterprises included East Bengal Sugar Mills Ltd, Ramnath Das and Co. (Managing Agents), Dhakeswari Cotton Mills Ltd and a number of stores, chemists, printers and banking and insurance companies. See Chabuk, Dacca, 6 March 1934.

75. For details of this period in Bengal politics, and economic and administrative problems see Abul Mansur Ahmad, Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchas Bachar (Fifty years of politics as I saw it) (second edition, Dacca, 1970), 234 - 237. See also P.R. Greenough, 'Famine Mortality, Destitution and Victimization: Bengal 1943 - 44 ', in M. David (ed.), Bengal, Studies in Literature, Society and History (Michigan State University, 1976 - South Asia Series Occasional Paper no. 27), 153.

76. See Cuttings from the Times (University Microfilms Ltd, High Wycombe, 1942 - 46), 20 & 23 Nov. 1943, 136, 137. The Times noted that, while during the famine in 1943 the black marketeers thrived, some 10 per cent of the population was reduced to destitution.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Greenough, 153.

80. In 1944 (31 March), Dacca Municipality's current demand was Rs 730,083 and the arrear was Rs 470,060. But only 86 warrants were issued. See The Annual Report of the Municipalities in Bengal, 1943 - 44, B.G.P. - 47/8 - 1830D - 400. See also Gyan Chand, Local Finance in India (Allahabad, 1947), 199.

81. Ibid.

82. Dacca Gazette Extraordinary, 19 Nov. 1947, 4.

83. These figures exclude the opening balance and the heads of debt and have been worked out on the basis of the figures given under various heads of income in the Administration Reports of Dacca Municipality. See A.A.R.D.M., 1930 - 31, 2 - 7; 1939 - 40, 2; the latter also gives figures for 1938 - 39; 1940 - 41, 2. Figures

for 1946 - 47 were obtained from a statement, Form II, attached to a letter from the P.A. to the Commissioner, Dacca Division, Government of East Bengal Health and Local Self-Government Department, 8 September 1949.

84. See Gyan Chand, 215.

85. M.P. Sharma, Local Self-Government in India (third edition, Allahabad, 1960), 178 - 179.

86. See the Act IV of 1914, Bengal, the Calcutta Municipal (Loans) Act, 1914, sections 128 and 141E, pp 1, 2 and 10; see also Gyan Chand, 210 - 211.

87. Gyan Chand mentioned only Karachi Municipality and Calcutta Corporation as borrowing on the open market. See Gyan Chand, 210 - 211.

88. M.P. Sharma, 178.

89. Tinker, 175; A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 4; 1926 - 27, 5; 1930 - 31, 6. In Dacca, the main sources of the Municipality's income were: municipal rates, grants and contributions, realizations under special Acts, revenue derived from markets, etc. Loans were the last source to which the Municipality resorted.

90. In the open market, the interest on loans was not above 4 per cent. See A.A.R.D.M., 1926 - 27, 5.

91. Loans taken by the Municipality during 1920 - 21 amounted to some Rs 15,000, which was less than 2 per cent of the total receipts of the year, including debt heads and closing balance (Rs 777,867). See A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 4. Rs 40,000 were borrowed in 1930 - 31 and constituted less than 6 per cent of total receipts including debt heads and closing balance (Rs 689,301), A.A.R.D.M., 1930 - 31. 8. A loan of one lakh rupees was taken in 1941 (D.M.P., 18 June 1941,1). In 1946, the Municipality borrowed another lakh of rupees at the low interest rate of Rs 3¼ annually, on condition that the total loan was repaid in one instalment only by 31 March 1947. See Dhaka Prokash, 15 Dec. 1946, 2.

91A. The figures for income do not include debt heads and opening balances, except those of 1900 - 01. All the figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand. The actual total receipts including debt heads and opening balances were Rs 190,936 in 1900 - 01, Rs 777,867 in 1920 - 21, Rs 973,835 in 1925 - 26, Rs 1,121,070 in 1926 - 27, Rs 689,301 in 1930 - 31 and Rs 712,843 in 1940 - 41. See A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 4; 1920 - 21, 4; 1926 - 27, 6; 1930 - 31, 8; 1940 - 41, 2.

92. The Act III of 1884, section 5, sub-section 3, p. 7 and the Act XV of 1932, section 3, sub-section 21, p. 4.

93. See the Act XV of 1932, chapter V, section 128, p. 63. See also C. Jha, Indian Local Self-Government (Patna, 1958 - 3rd ed.), 92.

94. See Gyan Chand, 93; the Act III of 1884, part IV, sec 95.

95. See the Act III of 1884, part IV, sections 85, 98. and the Act XV of 1932, chapter V, section 124, p. 61. See also Jha, 92.

96. See Gyan Chand, 92.

97. Jha, 92. In Dacca, the holding tax on government buildings was 7½ per cent and on rentable

properties 10 per cent. See A.A.R.D.M., 1900 -01, 2.

98. Gyan Chand, 92.
99. See Jha, 92.
100. See the Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, section 145, p. 70.
101. Ibid., section 146, p. 70.
102. See Gyan Chand, 95.
103. Ibid.
104. The Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, sections 138, 141 . The commissioners also had the power to reduce rates in cases of excessive hardship. See the Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, section 141, p. 68.
105. S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 274.
105A. A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 3.
106. See the Act III of 1884, part IV, sections 108, 109 ; the Act XV of 1932, Chapter V, Section 138.
107. A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 3; 1910 - 11, 2; 1920 - 21, 2 and 4.
108. Ibid.
109. Dhaka Prokash, 15 July 1923, 3.
110. See S.C. Sarkar's note quoted in Haider in A City, 100.
111. Dhaka Prokash, 15 July 1923, 3. In Dacca, the assessors were appointed by the commissioners at times, but their work could not reach a high and objective standard as, to save their jobs or to be re-employed, they had to please the commissioners who employed them. During the revaluation of 1935 in Dacca, Babu Akshoy Kumar Chakravarty, a retired District and Session Judge, was appointed by the Municipality as an assessor. See Haider in A City, 108.
112. The ratepayers objected to any increase in taxes in nineteenth century Dacca, as they did in the twentieth. See S.U. Ahmed, 'The History,' 279-80; see also A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 3 . This was typical of ratepayers throughout India; see Gillion, 119.
113. Gyan Chand, 96.
114. The primary concern of the commissioners was to bring civic facilities to the influential ratepayers and influential commissioners themselves, without digging deep into the ratepayers' pockets. See criticism of the ruling party on the board by the opposition in D.M.P., 12 Feb. 1943, 3.
115. Chairmen Khwaja Nazimuddin, S.K. Das, Pyarilal Das and Bimalananda Das Gupta were all wealthy people. See the occupations of the commissioners in politics chapter, p. 271-2. Again, this was not unique to Dacca. Tinker noted that 'local taxation merely represented what influential voters or members would put up with; it was not calculated to yield a fair share of even the inadequate wealth of the society of India or Burma'. See Tinker, The Foundations, 327.
116. A.A.R.D.M., 1933 - 34, 2; interview with Kshirode Lal Roy (a retired pleader who joined the Dacca Bar in 1920) in Dacca, 14 January, 1977.
117. B.A.R., 1922 - 23, 43.
118. A.A.R.D.M., 1910 - 11, 2.
119. The point will be discussed fully in the next chapter. See also Dhaka Prokash, 8 July 1923, 3; 15 July 1923, 3.

120. D.M.P., 28 June 1922; B.A.R., 1922 - 23, 44.
121. A.A.R.D.M., 1924 - 25, 4.
122. Dhaka Prokash, 25 Nov. 1923, 3.
123. Ibid.; A.A.R.D.M., 1924 - 25, 3.
124. A.A.R.D.M., 1924 - 25, 4.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid., 24; 1927 - 28, 22 - 23.
128. Ibid., 1928 - 29, 2.
129. Ibid., 1935 - 36, 6.
130. Ibid., 1947 - 48, 1.
131. For details see the chapter on municipal services.
132. During the years 1909 - 10 and 1910 - 11, the following people contributed money to the Municipality for the improvement of the town: Babu Rajani Kanta Pal, Babu Lal Mohan Pal, Khan Saheb Khwaja Mohammad Azam, Babu Tarak Chandra Ghose, Babu Bhaja Hari Goura Nitai Saha, Syud Hossain Ali, Babu Anath Bandhu Guha Thakurta, Prasanna Chandra Poddar, Gurudas Sircar and Motilal Saha. Only two of these donors were Muslim. See A.A.R.D.M., 1909 - 10, 7; 1910 - 11, 8. See p. 229 below for fluctuations in contributions.
133. These percentages excluded revenue derived from the head 'realisation under special Acts.' See A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 4; 1920 - 21, 4; 1926 - 27, 4, 5, 6 (the figures for 1925 - 26 are mentioned in the latter report); 1939 - 40, 1, 2 (the figures for 1938 - 39 are given in the latter report); 1940 - 41, 2; for 1946 - 47, see the statement of income and expenditure attached to the District Magistrate's Report, 19 July 1947. The higher percentages of grants in particular years were on account of funds required by the Municipality for, mainly, expanding and improving the water-works, constructing underground sewerage, for medical purposes, construction of sweepers' quarters and expanding primary and secondary education. For details, see the chapter on municipal services.
134. For the government contributions towards Health Officer's pay and half the pay of the Inspector of the registration of births and deaths, see B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 20, 23; 1940 - 41, 6. For government contributions to road transport funds, see A.A.R.D.M., 1939 - 40, 14 and B.E.D.M., 1940 - 41, 6.
134A. See A.A.R.D.M., 1927 - 28, 23; B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 12; 1941 - 42, 20.
135. B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 12; 1941 - 42, 20 See also Haider in A City, 158.
136. A.A.R.D.M., 1922 - 23, 6; B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 12; 1937 - 38, 14; 1941 - 42, 20. The value of 'tips' as a source of income to the collecting sarkars was not unique to Dacca; see Forrest, 122.
137. B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 12; 1941 - 42, 20.
138. B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 12; A.A.R.D.M., 1929 - 30, 6.
139. B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 12; 1935 - 36, 14.
140. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 6; 1930 - 31, 5; 1940 - 41, 2.
141. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 7; 1930 -31, 5. D.M.P., 1941, 18 June, 2; 1943, 12 Feb. 2.

142. For figures for 1919 - 20 and 1920 - 21, see A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 6 - 8. The figures for arrears are based on arrears under various revenue heads. See Haider in A City, 104. See also A.A.R.D.M., 1939 - 40, 2; 1940 - 41, 1; 1943 - 44, 2. For the 1946 - 47 figures, see Dacca Gazettee Extraordinary, 19 Nov. 1947, 2.
143. Haider in A City, 103.
144. B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 12; 1941 - 42, 20.
145. See A.A.R.D.M., 1924 - 25, 4 - 5. According to the report of the chairman, Khwaja Nazimuddin, a Sub-Inspector of Police and a tax collector were severely assaulted in Shankhari Bazar and two constables were defied in two separate incidents by the ratepayers. All this took place at the instigation of Bhuban Mohan Bysack, a leader of the ratepayers' association.
146. A.A.R.D.M., 1924 - 25, 5.
147. The Act III of 1884, part IV, section, 121, 125 ; the Act XV of 1932, chapter V, sections 156, 160, 162, pp. 73, 74, 75.
148. See Shonar Bangla, 1st year, 5th issue (Dacca, 4 Nov. 1933), 26. In 1933, Moulvi's arrears amounted to Rs 1,400 and his father's to about Rs 2,000. Another defaulting commissioner, Birendra Nath Bose, and his brother were also well known for their arrears; in 1934, the District Magistrate removed Biren Bose from his commissionership for chronic irresponsibility. But, with the help of N.N. Bagchi, the sixth Munsiff of Dacca, Bose successfully appealed against the local government on the ground that the District Magistrate had held no formal enquiry into the reasons for his default, that he had given Bose no hearing and that, before his removal, Bose had partly paid his arrears. See The Calcutta Municipal Gazette, 26 Sept. 1936, 745 - 746 (hereafter C.M.G.).
149. See Tinker, The Foundations, 328.
150. A.A.R.D.M., 1924 - 25, 4 - 5; 1926 - 27, 3.
151. The Calcutta Gazette (Supplement), 1 March 1926, 236.
152. See the Examiner's Report in D.M.P., 3 May 1922, 2, and Shonar Bangla, 4 Nov. 1933, 26.
153. A.A.R.D.M., 1924 - 25, 4 - 5; 1926 - 27, 3.
154. B.A.R., 1922 - 23, 39.
155. A.A.R.D.M., 1926 - 27, 3.
156. Ibid.
157. A.A.R.D.M., 1927 - 28, 23.
158. Ibid.
159. A.A.R.D.M., 1923 - 24, 14.
160. A.A.R.D.M., 1929 - 30 (MSS).
161. Nazimuddin left for Calcutta in December 1929 and his departure was followed by a power struggle over the chairmanship. Satish Chandra Sarkar chaired the board only for a few months in 1930 before Pyarilal Das was elected. For details see the chapter on politics, pp. 285 -288.
162. A.A.R.D.M., 1940 - 41, 1; see also 1930 - 31, 6; 1939 - 40, 1.
163. D.M.P., 18 June 1941, 1.
164. D.M.P., 12 Feb. 1943, 2.
165. Ibid.
166. Haider in A City, 100.
167. See Dacca Gazette Extraordinary, 19 Nov. 1947, 1 - 2.

168. For a discussion on Indian and Burmese municipalities' finance, see Tinker, The Foundations, 307 - 332.
169. Ibid., 331. See also Report of the Indian Taxation Enquiry Committee, 1924 - 1925 (1926), vol. i. 342, 344, 352.
170. M.P. Sharma, 176 - 177.
171. Ibid., 179.
172. Ibid.
173. For percentage of ratepayers to population and municipal taxation per head see A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 1; 1910 - 11, 2; 1920 - 21, 1, 2; 1930 - 31, 1; 1940 - 41, 1.
174. A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 4; 1910 - 11, 8; 1920 - 21, 4, 5; 1930 - 31, 2, 3; 1940 - 41, 1.
175. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 10, 16 and Appendix G of the Report.
176. For expenditure on various services see A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 10 - 12. To bridge the gap between demand for and supply of services was impossible also for other municipalities; see Gyan Chand, 222.
177. The Act XV of 1932, chapter IV, section 112, p. 56.
178. See Tinker, The Foundations, 59.
179. See A.A.R.D.M., 1933 - 34, 14; the Act XV of 1932, chapter IV, section 112, pp. 56, 57.
180. Tinker, The Foundations, 68. According to Bengal government records, however, the legal minimum was 3.2 per cent of the ordinary income. See B.A.R., 1933 - 34, 111. [quotes 5% as the minimum.]
181. See the Act XV of 1932, chapter IV, section 107, p. 50.
182. See the Act XV of 1932, chapter IV, section 107, p. 51 for the third and fourth priorities.
See chapter III, section 70, p. 35, for contributions to pensions, gratuities, etc.
183. A.A.R.D.M., 1933 - 34, 5. See also Tinker, The Foundations, 311. Tinker notes that prior to the twenties, Karachi Municipality could not raise even a peon's salary without the Divisional Commissioner's sanction, while Nagpur Municipality needed the sanction of the central government to raise the executive officer's salary to Rs 350 per month. See Tinker, The Foundations, 68.
183A. Tinker, The Foundations, 311.
184. See the Act XV of 1932, chapter IV, section 112, pp. 56 - 57. These regulations had continued from the 1884 Act. In practice, no budget made by Dacca Municipality was refused approval or sanction by the local government during our period.
185. A.A.R.D.M., 1900 - 01, 4; 1920 - 21, Appendix F; 1930 - 31, Appendix F; 1940 - 41, Appendix F. For figures in 1947 see Appendix F of the statement attached to the Divisional Commissioner's report, 8 Sept. 1949, to Deputy Secretary to Government of East Bengal, Health and Local Self Government Department (hereafter Divisional Commissioner's Report, 1949).
186. See A.A.R.D.M., 1930 - 31, 7 - 8; 1940 - 41, 5 - 6.
187. B.E.D.M., 1926 - 27, 13.
188. B.E.D.M., 1940 - 41, 24.
189. A.A.R.D.M., 1930 - 31, 7 - 8; 1940 - 41, 5 - 6.
190. A.A.R.D.M., 1939 - 40, 6; 1940 - 41, 5 - 6.
191. A.A.R.D.M., 1910 - 11, ; 1920 - 21, 5 (the actual figure was 30,511); 1930 - 31, 7 (actual figure 49,304);

1940 - 41, 3 (actual figure 50,146). For 1947 figures see District Magistrate's Report, 19 July,1947.

192. District Magistrate's Report, 19 July,1947.

193. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 15; 1930 - 31, 17; 1940 - 41, 14.

194. The depression affected other municipalities also. For general discussion of the subcontinental municipalities' performance in education during the thirties, see Tinker, The Foundations, 264 - 278.

195. See B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 25; 1940 - 41, 55. Average pay was about Rs 25 per month.

196. Interview with Qazi Motahar Hossain in Dacca. For a general impression of politics and patronage, see also Tinker, The Foundations, 273.

197. B.E.D.M., 1940 - 41, 55. Discriminatory pay scales also existed in some other municipalities, even after the Partition of India. See V. Venkat Rao, 'Municipal Administration in Assam,' in Municipal India, 108.

198. For the figures, see A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 5; 930 - 31, 10; 1940 - 41, 3.

199. Half of the Engineer's pay was contributed by the provincial government. The Health Officer's salary was Rs 400 per month for nine months and Rs 420 for three months in 1927 - 28; the Engineer's salary was Rs 400 for nine months and Rs 410 for three months. Their scales were lowered as an economy measure during the depression of the thirties, the Health Officer receiving Rs 260 per month in 1940 - 41, the Engineer Rs 350; their motor car allowance had gone up, though, from Rs 50 to Rs 75 per month. Two clerks and two peons were added to the staff. See B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 20; 1930 - 31, 21; 1941 - 42, 50.

200. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 5; 1930 - 31, 8, 9; 1940 - 41, 3.

201. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 10, 12, 13; 1930 - 31, 8.

202. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 12.

203. Ibid., 13.

204. Ibid., 15; 1930 - 31, 17; 1940 - 41, 13.

205. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 4, 5; 1930 - 31, 8, 9; 1940 - 41, 2, 3.

206. A.A.R.D.M., 1940 - 41, 6.

207. Estimated income from water rate in 1926 - 27, for example, was Rs 99,465 and the actual receipt was Rs 86,868. See B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 1; A.A.R.D.M., 1926 - 27, 5. Similarly, Rs 334,000 was estimated as income from water rate in 1940 - 41, while the actual income was Rs 93,470. See B.E.D.M., 1941 - 42, 10; A.A.R.D.M., 1940 - 41, 2. For expenditure on various services, the Municipality was guided more by opportunity than the needs of the city. This lack of foresight with regard to income, and the framing of 'opportunity oriented' budgets, was not unique either to Dacca or the colonial period. It continued after independence, as Usha Banerjee observed in Health Administration in a Metropolis (New Delhi, 1976), 172.

208. A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 16 (the rate of interest charged was 6 per cent); 1922 - 23, 15.

209. A.A.R.D.M., 1930 - 31, 18.

210. Supplement to the Calcutta Gazette, 17 March 1932, 283. No less than Rs 45,804 were paid out on advances to staff in 1920 - 21, Rs 91,370 in 1926 - 27 and Rs 54,856 in 1940 - 41 (A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 5; 1926 - 27, 8; 1940 - 41, 3).

211. See the chapter on municipal services, pp. 112 - 118.
212. B.E.D.M., 1927 - 28, 11 - 27; 1941 - 42, 18 - 56.
213. B.A.R., 1927 - 28, 119.
214. Ibid.
215. In 1927 - 28, Dacca's closing balance was Rs 278,584; Howrah and Darjeeling had Rs 266,859 and Rs 101,413 respectively. See B.A.R., 1927 - 28, 111; A.A.R.D.M., 1927 - 28, 19.
216. Dacca Municipality, like other municipalities in Bengal, did not adjust the advances before making fresh advances to the staff. Sometimes advances had to be written off because the methors had absconded. No method was developed of realizing the advances systematically and regularly. See Government of Bengal, Local Self-Government Proceedings, October 1929, 61 - 69.
217. Proceedings of Government of Bengal, Local Self-Government Department, 1935, 23.
218. Ibid.
219. The District Magistrate's Report, 27 Sept. 1939.
220. Ibid.
221. Ibid.
222. Ibid.
222A. Ibid.
223. Ibid.
224. No proper local government service developed in our period; Tinker considered this one of the chief reasons 'for the poor showing of many local bodies.' Tinker, The Foundations, 340; see also ibid, 72, 341 for further discussion on this point.
225. A.A.R.D.M., 1939 - 40, 16. Manindra Kumar Sur and Lakshmi Kanta served the municipality to the very end of our period. See Thacker's Indian Directory, Civil Division, 1944 - 45, 10 - 11.
226. See the addresses of welcome given by the Municipality to A.K. Fazlul Huq, 13 July, 1937; Sir John Herbert, 2 July, 1940; S.K. Basu, 29 July, 1942, in Dacca Municipality's Record Room, Collection no. XXI, File no. 58. For the proportion of ratepayers to the population see above, p. 241.
227. The District Magistrate's Report, 19 July 1947.

Chapter 4

Municipal Politics: Players and Supporters

The success or failure of any institution depends to a considerable extent upon the qualities of those who man and direct it. Before 1884 the Municipality of Dacca, like most other Bengali municipalities, was dominated by government officials. The Divisional Commissioner, the District Magistrate and the Executive Engineer were usually ex-officio members, and the chairmanship and often the office of secretary too, was in official hands. The enthusiasm or indifference of the District Magistrate was a most significant element in the success or failure of municipal institutions in Dacca.[1]

The power of the District Magistrate outside the municipal council chamber was so potent that his influence, when he chose to exert it, was usually paramount.[2] The presence of non-official municipal commissioners, however able - and S.U. Ahmed argues that many were able men - might modify but could not effectively counter that power, since it was to his nomination that they owed their very appointment.[3] The nominated members were selected as men of influence and 'respectability',[4] but also for their loyalty, and both their loyalty and influence were reinforced by the favours bestowed upon them - the titles and honours, the tax commissionerships, the honorary magistracies and memberships of various boards in the gift of government.[5]

Those selected were long drawn from the notables of the towns, the householders, bankers and merchants who were traditional sources of patronage and influence in the city.[6] By the 1870s, however, there were new claimants to a share in municipal power from the growing body of educated subordinate officials, teachers, lawyers and doctors. In 1874 the Dacca Peoples' Association, formed to voice the aspirations of this western-educated middle class and the claims of 'out' segments of older landed or commercial elites, petitioned the Lieutenant Governor to apply to Dacca Municipality the elective principles of Act II of 1873.[7] Their appeal was turned down, local officials warning government of the loss of efficiency which such a move would cause.[8] But the District Magistrate found it necessary to disarm criticism by the nomination of two teachers and a government pleader as commissioners.[9]

Under Ripon the pace of change increased. He recognised a political danger in a 'rigid bureaucracy and a rising Indian middle class, both pulling in two opposite directions',[10] and complained that 'the officers of Government look only at the administrative and disregard the political aspect of the question of local government'.[11] To avoid official obstruction, he therefore intervened to impose local self-government. Sir Rivers-Thompson, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, was a bitter opponent of Ripon's policy, but under Act III of 1884 Bengal fell into line. In Dacca, under the Act, fourteen of the twenty-one commissioners came to be elected, and after the first election in November 1884 the non-official majority, proceeded, despite the expressed disapproval of the District Magistrate, to elect their own chairman and vice-chairman.[12] By 1885-86 more than half the members of the Bengal municipalities were elected.[13]

The introduction of the elective principle did not end official influence on the Municipality. The District Magistrate was no longer chairman but he remained a fount of honours and by his authority in the district able to affect many aspects of men's lives. And those who were elected continued in the main to be drawn from the notables of the city, with a long tradition of collaboration with government. This had been ensured by the nature of the municipal franchise. In India as a whole only about two per cent of the urban population received a municipal vote. But though in Bengal the figure was five per cent the dice were heavily loaded in favour of wealth and property [14] (and only men benefitted - women had no vote.) The vote in Dacca was thus given only to those who paid a certain level of house tax or who, being members of a joint family which paid such tax, were qualified by being graduates or licentiates of any university, pleaders, mukhtars or legal agents, or employees earning more than fifty rupees a month. The total number entitled to vote in Dacca in 1884 was 7,202 and out of a total population of some 82,210.[15]

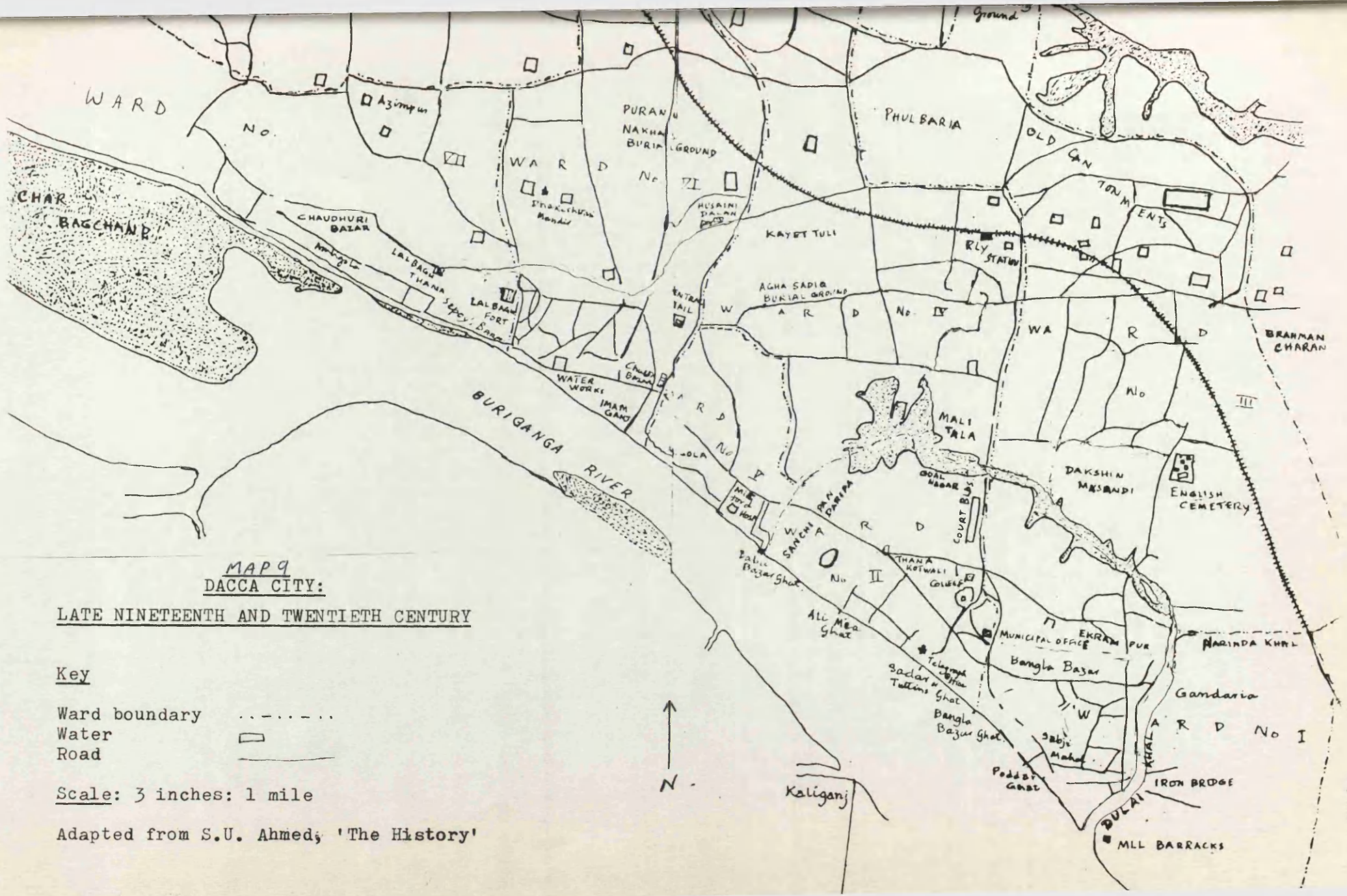
It is not now possible to analyse the electorate in terms of class, occupation, literacy etc. All that the records provide is an analysis of voting behaviour, and of the composition of the elected membership of successive municipal boards. From this three features emerge: that the introduction of elections did not lead to any very noticeable change in the type of commissioners elected, that many voters did not vote at all, and that voting and the subsequent

allocation of power on the board was not dominated by communal considerations. British officials in 1884 had been alarmed at the prospect of their old allies being displaced by more radical, western-educated middle-class candidates but, in the event, of the fourteen elected members only two could be so claimed - both of them lawyers. The other twelve, as before, were zamindars, merchants and bankers, entirely 'safe' men from the British point of view. Of the two lawyers, one, Ananda Chandra Roy, was indeed elected chairman of the Municipality, a post for which his 'intelligence' and 'command of English' made him especially suitable, but as S.U. Ahmed notes Roy was a generally popular figure [16] rather than the representative of a new and demanding class. Of the other commissioners it could be said that all were rich and 'respectable', but most had no English education and some no formal education at all.[17] In 1921 the class composition would still be the same: one pleader, one teacher and twelve described as landholder, zamindar, merchant or banker.[18]

The success in municipal politics of such men derived in part from their understanding of the need to protect their interests by taking an active role in the municipality, in part from their ability to use their economic muscle to that end. That economic power was sometimes directly exerted - wholesale merchants had a natural clientele of retailers, bankers of borrowers, landholders of tenants and retained lawyers and in so far as they had entered the urban property market, of house tenants too - but it was also applied indirectly in the form of social and religious leadership: they were rais because of their patronage of temple or mosque or Hussaini Dalan, of medical charities, of education, or in the case of the Nawab family of Dacca of essential civic services such as water or street lighting apart from other charities, and as rais, they could command voters' allegiance. The political use of the institution of charity was common all over India. Once in office, the patronage of these people was increased by command of municipal appointments and the many minor opportunities to grant or withhold favour in the operation of building regulations or the assessment of house tax.[19] Their power was also that much greater because until 1921 voting by the quite small, very visible electorate was public, not by secret ballot. The comparatively low turn-out from among those qualified to vote may well have been the result of individual judgements that the dangers of openly casting a vote were greater than the possible rewards.

The third feature of municipal politics from 1884 onwards was the absence of any thoroughgoing communal alignment. S.U. Ahmed has recorded the signs early in 1884 that the Hindus, with their larger number of qualified voters, might organize to seize power and the subsequent drawing back from that option in favour of an unspoken balance, exemplified in the practice of having chairmen and vice-chairmen of the opposite community, and the large role in the Municipality allotted to the Nawab of Dacca's family.[20] This remained largely true despite the tensions caused by the Partition of Bengal in 1905 - welcomed by Nawab Salimullah of Dacca with the words ' there are many good things in store for us ... and the Mahomedans being the largest in number in the new province, they will have the largest share ... This is the golden opportunity which God and his prophet have offered us ... '[21] and opposed by the Congress leaders and by the extremists who formed a network of Anushilan cells, no less than 16 in the city itself under the leadership of Pulinbehari Das and Bhupeshchandra Nag, and infiltrated schools in Wari, making them 'hotbed of disloyalty and revolutionary principles'.[22] The Morley-Minto Reforms, more particularly the institution of separate electorates [22A] also had an indirect effect on Dacca's municipal politics since municipalities and local boards were primary electoral constituencies for the provincial councils. Separate electorates were not introduced for the Dacca Municipality, however, while in 1916 the Congress - League Lucknow Pact palliated their existence at provincial and national level.[23] The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had urged that in Muslim majority provinces separate electorates for Muslims should be abolished. In the Act of 1919, however, the recommendation was set aside. The surrender of political authority into Indian hands began in Bengal, therefore, with separate electorates for Muslims, who secured 39 elective seats as opposed to the Hindus' 46, returned by just under and just over half a million voters respectively.[24]

The Act involved a much wider electorate in provincial politics, but a much wider one at local levels too. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had recommended that nominated members should not exceed one fourth of the total municipal membership and that elected chairmen should be the general rule.[25] By 1925-26 less than a tenth of all the municipalities in India lacked an elected chairman and fourteen per cent of the urban population of the country had been enfranchised.[26]



MAP 9

DACCA CITY:

LATE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY

Key

Ward boundary .....

Water

Road

Scale: 3 inches: 1 mile

Adapted from S.U. Ahmed, 'The History'

In Dacca, however, the 1884 Act remained in force and at the first post-Reforms municipal election, though the size of the electorate had gone up to 8,515, this represented only over 7 per cent of the enlarged city population of 119,450.[27] But though the franchise remained unaltered for the 1921 municipal elections there was one notable change in procedure. This was the introduction of the secret ballot.[28] Though the elections for the provincial legislature under the reformed constitution may have engaged more public attention and aroused stronger emotions, the new municipal election procedure induced a very massive turn-out of voters - some eighty as opposed to about sixty two per cent of the electorate on earlier occasions. Unfortunately the enthusiasm of the electors was not matched with the efficiency of the polling arrangements which obviously fell far short of the demand, as 'a good number' of the voters had to leave the polling stations 'after nightfall without recording their votes'.[29] There were only seven polling centres - one in each ward, which proved 'miserably inadequate' for the first three large wards where polling continued until the following morning.[30] Novelty may have played a part, but it does seem probable that secrecy encouraged many who had previously feared to attract the attention of the locally mighty, or of government.

Fourteen persons, all Indian, were voted into the Municipality in 1921, while seven were appointed, four of whom were Indians and the rest Europeans. Indians thus had an overwhelming majority on the board. The ward, name and occupation of the fourteen elected commissioners were as follows:[31]

Ward	Name	Occupation
1	Khwaja Nazimuddin MA BL	Landholder and member of the Nawab family of Dacca
	Pyarilal Das	Banker and Zamindar
	Sarat Chandra Chakravarty BL	Pleader
2	NabendraNath Bysack	Merchant
	Satish Chandra Sarkar MA	Teacher
3	Abul Hasanath Ahmed	'Respectable Muslim'
	Keshab Chandra Banerjee	Zamindar and Banker
4	Moulvi Abdul Malik	'Respectable Muslim' and landholder
	Nawab Khwaja Mohammad Yousuff Khan Bahadur	'Respectable Muslim' and member of the Nawab family

5	Satyendra Kumar Das	Zamindar, banker and merchant
	Rakhal Chandra Bysack	Leading merchant
6	Moulvi Allah Bux	'Respectable Muslim'
7	Sitanath Dey Sarkar	Merchant
	Dhirendra Chandra Roy	Zamindar

The very traditional elite nature of the elected membership of the Municipality comes out very strongly from the above table. The column 'occupation' reveals the fact that the fourteen elected members were not an unhomogeneous body, as many members combined land-ownership with indigenous banking and with mercantile enterprizes. The Nawabs of Dacca, for example, were the greatest landowners in the region, yet they owned an ice factory and a newspaper and the family had originally made its fortune by trading in hides and gold dust.[32] Pyarilal Das (who later started signing his name as Pyarilal Doss when he became the chairman of Dacca Municipality for the second time in 1930) was a well known banker as well as a zamindar. Similarly Satyendra Kumar Das had more than one source of income, being banker, merchant and zamindar. The fact that five members include landholding as one element in a double attribution is a reminder, of course, that success in trade or industry was still often consecrated by the acquisition of zamindari status. Wealth could be transmitted into social status by charitable good works, by ostentatious religious benefactions [33] or by the purchase of government honours and titles. The growth of nationalist feeling expressed in the boycott movement might temporarily dim the lustre of such honours but did not long reduce their attractiveness.[34] For many, however, the final seal of approval was provided by a listing as landholders. In this the four nominated Indian commissioners - Rai Sarada Prasad Sen Bahadur, zamindar, Babu Lalit Mohan Das, zamindar, Bhagabat Prasanna Saha Sankhanidhi, leading merchant and landholder and Syed Abdul Hafiz from the Nawab family - were at one with the elected members.

The combination of extensive property in land, of public charitableness on a grand scale and of government recognition was what lay behind the continuous importance, both before and during our period, of the Nawab family in municipal as in regional politics. Hindus, elected and nominated, might hold as many as twelve seats as opposed to six of the Muslims, but when a successor to the long serving Khwaja Mohammad Yousuff of the Nawab family (chairman - 1899-1901;

1905-1916; 1919-1922) was required, it was another Muslim, Khwaja Nazimuddin, who was elected - another member of the Nawab family.[35]

This was not just a coincidence. Ever since the Mutiny of 1857, when the Khwaja family of Dacca helped the East India Company to quell the rebellion locally, its leadership had been firmly established in the city.[36] The attitude of local government towards the Khwajas was typified by a remark of C.E. Buckland, the District Magistrate, in 1858; he said that they :'have long held the leading position in Eastern Bengal. In wealth, in liberality, in founding works of public utility ... the family had stood and stands pre-eminent'.[37] The unreserved admiration of British officials after the Mutiny added an extra lustre to the Nawab's position in the local society. With the blessing of the British government the Nawab family had a say in all important matters relating to Eastern Bengal. That the family should have a major role in the Municipality was thus almost inevitable.

The patronage which control of the Municipality might yield was not perhaps large, certainly not if contrasted with the Nawabs' other sources of influence. But to serve the city by being a commissioner of the Municipality in modern times might be an alternative to the individual charity of the past and one which was more certain to secure British approval. From its inception therefore the Municipality provided a role in which the Nawabs could maintain and enhance their social position. And the channeling of their munificence through this public, Western institution proved to be rewarding. It has already been recorded how Khwaja Abdul Ghani provided for the construction of water-works for the city at his own expense in 1874 and how promptly government rewarded this generosity with the title of Nawab Bahadur in 1875, followed in 1877, after the Nawab had increased his original Rs50,000 to Rs2,50,000, by the award of a KCSI. His son, Ahsanullah, followed this up by contributing largely to the installation of electricity in the city, and by 1877 the title of Nawab Bahadur had been made hereditary.[38] The public liberality of the family was not exhausted by these gestures: Khwaja Abdul Ghani contributed Rs60,000 to the Ahsanullah Ward of the Mitford Hospital, the first female ward,[39] and his son Nawab Ahsanullah, following in his father's footsteps, donated Rs50,000 towards the opening of the Lady Dufferin Ward, which synchronized with the visit of Lady Dufferin, the

consort of the Viceroy.[40] The Nawabs' palatial mansion, Ahsan Manzil, built in 1872 overlooking the river, was lavishly furnished 'in the best European style' and with the garden houses in Dilkusha and Shahbagh was the setting for 'splendid hospitality', offered to Europeans and Indians alike. Their lifestyle and their 'phenomenal liberality' were very much in the Mughal grandee idiom. The 'chai khana darbar' - the reception or audience at which the Nawab would listen to people's grievances or requests and offer advice or financial assistance-was very much in this tradition. So was the leadership which the Nawab family provided for the Muslim community.[41] The Nawabs were at the centre of the organization of many religious festivals, and the burden of supporting the Hussaini Dalan, the main Shiah religious centre in Eastern Bengal, fell mainly on them.[42] And apart from patronizing the Hussaini Dalan as both a social and religious centre, the Khwajas were also involved in repairing and maintaining a number of mosques in Dacca. They also started the first Muslim boys' school in the city. The role of Nawab Sir Salimullah (Ahsanullah's son) during the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and in creating the Muslim League in 1906 further demonstrated the Khwajas' concern for the Muslim community. They were also regarded as instrumental in establishing the High Court and the University in Dacca.[43]

The Khwajas in their public actions sought effectively to combine roles approved both by government and by their community and fellow citizens. Their association with Dacca Municipality, from its inception, was very much a case in point. And in that association they assumed as of right positions of authority and honour. Khwajas Ahsanullah and Yousuff Jan were both municipal commissioners before 1900 while Khwaja Asghar became the first nominated vice-chairman of the Dacca Municipality in 1879, Khwaja Amirullah its first elected vice-chairman, while in 1891 Khwaja Asghar became the first elected Muslim chairman. Eight years later Khwaja Yousuff Jan also became chairman, an office which he held again from 1905 to 1916 and once more from 1919 to 1922 when he was succeeded by another Khwaja, Nazimuddin. Between 1912 and 1922 two more members of the family - Khwajas Azizullah and Shahabuddin-also served the city as municipal commissioners.[44] Nor was the influence of the Nawab family in local government limited to the Municipality: Khwaja Yousuff Jan, for instance, was elected vice-chairman of Dacca District Board in 1898 and he was also an Honorary

Magistrate for twenty-nine years. Khwaja Azizullah was also an Honorary Magistrate during the twenties and thirties. So were Khwajas Afzal and Shahabuddin who also became the vice-chairman (1928) and later the chairman of the District Board.[45]

Through their wealth, religious leadership, traditional charities and also by using the British system, the Nawab family of Dacca had become the most influential family in Eastern Bengal long before our period. It was to be expected, therefore, that a Khwaja should have been elected to municipal office, as Nazimuddin was in 1921. But Khwaja Nazimuddin had rather more claim to the chairmanship than most, for he was the most educated member of his family at the time, with a Cambridge MA. as well as a Bar-at-Law. Many members of the family had little formal education, but it had become obvious that exposure to western education was becoming an essential preparation for a political role. Khwaja Yousuff Jan, who lacked any academic qualification himself, therefore sent his son, Khwaja Afzal, to both school and college. Though he too graduated in the end he was always remembered as the first Khwaja to pass matriculation, as Nazimuddin was the first to take MA.[46]

The municipal chairmanship was not, however, the summit of Khwaja Nazimuddin's ambition. His eyes were set on provincial political prizes. As he was not the Nawab Bahadur or an heir to that title, his chance of being nominated to the Governor's Executive Council was remote. Even his chance of entering the Provincial Legislative Council was poor unless he could make himself fairly known in some way. That way was provided by municipal politics. He came into the Municipality unopposed from ward number 1, as the only Muslim candidate. This was not uncommon in case of the Nawab family. No one had opposed Khwaja Yousuff, either, during the municipal election in 1905 or 1921. But Khwaja Nazimuddin soon had to face election as well as opposition on the board. His further advance to the chairmanship had to be secured by election. He was able to mobilize the Muslim commissioners and to count on the support of the ex-officio government members, but the crucial votes were those of four Hindus - Bhagabat Prasanna Saha Sankhanidhi, Satyendra Kumar Das, Rai Pyari Lal Das Bahadur and Rakhal Chandra Bysack. There was no question of using party loyalties to secure their votes - party solidarity had not yet drawn lines in municipal politics, Hindu or Muslim. S.K. Das,

for instance, was a Mahasabhaite, Moulvi Abdul Malik a Khilafatist, yet both voted for Nazimuddin. Nor did political experience count for much, for Nazimuddin's opponent, Dhirendra Chandra Roy, previously vice-chairman, had years of municipal experience behind him while Nazimuddin had none.[47] What seems really to have mattered was standing with government, an attitude strengthened during the twenty year alliance of Nawab Yousuff with officialdom. Dhirendra was the son of Ananda Chandra Roy, a staunch opponent of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and later of the proposed establishment of Dacca University - both government gifts for the Muslims;[47A] he was consequently a less attractive candidate than Nazimuddin from the government's point of view. Nazimuddin thus came to office as the latest representative of both the Nawab family and the alliance with government. An analysis of the voting in favour of his chairmanship brings this out very clearly. Two votes were Nawab family votes, his own and that of Nawab Yousuff; four were Muslim votes, no Muslim votihg against; three were official votes, the additional District Magistrate, the Civil Surgeon and the Railway Engineer; and three were the votes of nominated members, Syed Abdul Hafiz, already noted as a Muslim vote, Rai Bahadur S.P. Sen and B.P. Saha Sankhanidhi who was Nazimuddin's proposer. These eleven votes already provided a clear majority, but they were reinforced by the votes of Rai Bahadur Piyarilal Das, an old member of the 'government party,' and of the leading merchant, Rakhal Chandra Bysack.

Nazimuddin's opponent, the outgoing vice-chairman, Dhirendra Chandra Roy, whose father had been the first elected chairman of Dacca Municipality, was proposed by Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, an eminent, successful and independent lawyer, seconded by Lalit Mohan Das, an eminent zamindar and, unexpectedly, a nominated member of the board. His other supporters were the two merchants, N.N. Bysack and S.D. Sarkar, the zamindar, S.K. Das, and, again unexpectedly, Keshab Chandra Banerjee, zamindar and banker, who was a nominated member and normally to be found in the ranks of the loyalists. K.C. Banerjee's

support for Dhirendra Roy was returned that same day when Dhirendra seconded Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das who was the proposer for the vice-chairmanship of K.C. Banerjee. There was seemingly a Hindu sub-group here within the government party.

Nazimuddin's success may therefore be attributed to the support of the ex-officio members, who as officials might be expected to support any candidate from the Nawab family because of the family's long established loyalty to the Raj - a loyalty which had remained unblemished even during the Khilafat and non-co-operation movements of the early twenties-and that of the nominated members expected to heed government's wishes at an election presided over by the District Magistrate or the Additional District Magistrate. (One of them, Syed Abdul Hafiz, who seconded Nazimuddin's nomination, was also related to the Nawab family.) Nazimuddin, as nephew of the Nawab, could expect personally to rally Muslim support and through the East Bengal Zamindars and Landholders' Association to secure the support of some Hindu zamindars and merchants.[48] Keshab Chandra Banerjee, an Honorary Magistrate, could similarly draw both upon government support and upon the support of fellow zamindars of East Bengal in whose cause he was actively engaged, organizing their meetings and conferences.[49] To a considerable degree, however, voting and alliances were still formed round personalities and narrow factional interests rather than even local party structures, let alone such national bodies as Congress, the Muslim League or the Hindu Mahasabha.[50]

This was as true of shifts and allegiance after the elections as it was of alliances during them. During the course of 1922 S.D. Sarkar and N.N. Bysack, who had voted against Nazimuddin, succeeded in luring Moulvi Allah Bux away from the chairman's group and into what became in 1923 a vigorous ratepayers' association campaign to prevent a house tax revaluation. Whether any disappointment in the municipal rewards for his support of Nazimuddin was the motive for this shift from the ranks of the Muslims to an alliance with two fellow merchants is not known. But the reputation or notoriety he earned as 'the friend of the ratepayers', though it cost him his seat on the board, helped him to victory in the 1923 provincial legislative elections when he defeated Nawabzada Khan Bahadur Khwaja Mohammad Afzal by 116 votes to take the Muslim municipal constituency as a Swarajist.[51]

The absence of party solidarity also permitted a crossing of the municipal floor in a contrary direction. For instance, the defeated candidate for the chairmanship, Dhirendra Chandra Roy, swallowed his pride and joined hands with Nazimuddin against his own supporters, S.D. Sarkar and N.N. Bysack. Satyendra Kumar Das, the defeated candidate for the vice-chairmanship, also supported Nazimuddin. Both S.K. Das and Pyarilal Das contested the provincial election for the Hindu seat from the Dacca municipal constituency.[52] Neither, however, thought it worthwhile to abandon their links with the Nawab-government party in order to carry favour with the ratepayers by joining in the campaign against increased property taxes. Both were by temperament loyalist conservatives, who would have found the radical populism of the ratepayers' agitation distasteful.

The property tax campaign was a sign, however, of the way in which provincial politics, with the transfer of power to elected ministers for local self-government, education and agriculture, a much enlarged electorate and separate communal representation, was likely to impinge upon municipal politics. Ambitious politicians would increasingly seize upon municipal issues as items in their provincial campaigns as they certainly did in Dacca in 1923. In that year a Ratepayers' Association was formed with a well known barrister, R.K. Das as chairman and Syam Chand Bysack, merchant and brother of Nabendra Nath, the municipal commissioner, as secretary. R.K. Das had apparently no political ambitions, though he may have gained professionally, as a result of the publicity leading the campaign produced. For Syam Chand, however, as for Moulvi Allah Bux, the campaign was intended to produce a support base among the ratepayers, as the champion of a popular cause, which would secure his election to the Legislative Assembly. That aim was in the event frustrated, Pyarilal Das defeating him in the election,[53] but he had achieved great success with his no-tax propaganda and as has been seen had caused serious financial problems for Nazimuddin's board.[54]

The chairman and the secretary of the Ratepayers' Association arranged a whole series of public meetings in the city and vigorously protested against the prospect of increase in municipal taxes.[55] A deputation of the ratepayers met Nazimuddin and discussed their grievances with him. But the matter could not end there, because this was not a genuine ratepayers' agitation, but one instigated mainly by

politically motivated municipal commissioners. It is never difficult to work up feelings against tax burdens and in this case emotions were still aroused by the last of the non-co-operation and Khilafat movements so that the whole city was in a ferment. At the protest meetings, resolutions of no confidence in the chairman and the vice-chairman of the Municipality were passed and the leaders accused them of being responsible for the utter chaos in Dacca Municipality's administration. The anti-chairman faction within the board also was very active and persuaded the chairman to hold a meeting in order to settle the taxation issue. Three representatives of the ratepayers were supposed to be present at the meeting, which was fixed for 29 August 1923. At the instigation of the anti-Nazimuddin group about three thousand people flocked into the courtyard of and around the Municipality making the situation explosive. Confronted on his arrival by this mass of people the chairman immediately declared the meeting illegal and dismissed it. Three commissioners immediately came out of the municipal office, 'in a very agitated state', to protest against the action of the chairman and asked the assembled people, who were presumably the ratepayers, to stop paying taxes to the Municipality altogether.[56] These three commissioners were Nabendra Nath Bysack (brother of Syam Chand Bysack), Sitanath Dey Sarkar and Moulvi Allah Bux. Since the two Hindu commissioners had proposed and seconded the vice-chairman at the election, their agitation was virtually directed against Nazimuddin.[57]

Some commissioners accused the trio of being communists and troublemongers while the District Magistrate condemned their behaviour as reprehensible. The vice-chairman, unimpressed by their recent support for him and not wishing to offend the District Magistrate, strongly criticized their behaviour. In order to purge the board of such disruptive elements the District Magistrate asked Khwaja Nazimuddin to have an inquest on the incident of 29 August.[58] And not unpredictably, discussion of the incident and condemnation of the three commissioners flowed freely in two extraordinary meetings of the Municipality held on 14 and 15 September. It was decided in the meetings that these commissioners had no respect for municipal laws and administration and that ever since they entered the board they had been nothing but irresponsible, obstructionist rabble rousers. At the initiative of Dhirendra Chandra Roy, the vice-chairman, a vote was taken on a motion to remove them from the board, which was supported by the majority of commissioners after a heated debate. The agitators were therefore

ousted from the Municipality altogether.[59] Without the open and constant backing of the District Magistrate it would have been difficult for Nazimuddin's faction to take such a firm line with the opposition.

It was more important than ever for government to rally support on the municipal boards for this was the moment when in wider provincial politics the moderates, encouraged by successive Governors Ronaldshay and Lytton, were making a desperate effort to demonstrate that the 1919 Reforms were worth accepting and working. By 1923 the moderates seemed to be failing under the attacks of non-co-operators and of communalists. It behoved the Bengal Government to deploy all its remaining influence in the municipalities behind loyalists within them. To hold Dacca steady was particularly necessary since the reform proposals for the Calcutta Corporation introduced in 1922 by Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee as Minister for Local Self-Government had run into appalling difficulties. He succeeded in enlarging the franchise quite considerably and in giving women the vote too and in making sure that the scope for official interference was 'strictly limited'. But in securing what he described as 'a veritable Swaraj in the government of the second city of the Empire',[60] he had made the moderate style of politics more difficult, and in seeking to reduce separatist tendencies by replacing separate electorates with reserved seats in general constituencies for Muslims and Europeans, had unleashed communal forces - Muslim, Marwari and European - which deepened, where he had sought to bridge, cleavages. 'In order to ensure Muslim support, without which the bill must have been defeated, Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee was obliged to insert provision for communal representation'.[61] It was against this background that the Divisional Commissioner of Dacca and the District Magistrate, J.C. Drummond, lent their full support to Nazimuddin in riding out the no-tax storm and throwing overboard the trio of malcontents. The success of the government party was very welcome and Drummond was fulsome in his praise for the Khwaja's 'great courage, forbearance and tact' in steering the Municipality through 'a very unpleasant and diffucult situation'.[62]

The importance of Nazimuddin in the politics of Dacca Municipality was greatly enhanced by the death in December 1923 of Khwaja Yousuff, that old and tested loyalist. He had been popular with all the District Magistrates and Divisional Commissioners on whose recommend-

ations he had been made Khan Bahadur in 1904 and Nawab in 1910. Lord Ronaldshay, laying the foundation stone of the Victory Memorial at the Sadar Ghat in 1920 had pronounced a eulogy on the Nawab Sahib who from his very youth had set a course from which he never veered. 'The lodestone upon which he set the needle of his compass was the welfare of the town and district of Dacca and the betterment of his fellow countrymen. And from the first to the last and in fair weather and in foul, unmoved by the shifting winds of popular opinion- now blowing far like a dancing breeze on a smiling sea, now raging fiercely like a hurricane over an ocean - he had held firm the helm of his life's barge, setting example himself by following fearlessly the path of the golden mean. To do honour to such man is to do honour to ourselves'.[63] And at his death Lord Lytton, praising his 'genial disposition, his sparkling humour and brilliant attainments' and his energy on behalf of every good cause, whether as chairman of the Municipality or the District Board, voiced what was doubtless a genuine sense of loss.[64] Another loyal Khwaja was at once recommended by the District Mgaistrate to fill the vacant seat of the late Nawab, his son Khwaja Afzal Khan, already an Honorary Magistrate of Dacca,[65] and before the end of the year he had been duly nominated.[66] The burden of leadership rested very clearly, however, upon Nazimuddin.

He could count upon the official and nominated members, but it was the support of three moderate, loyalist Hindus which really strengthened his hand: Rai Bahadur Pyari Lal Das, Keshab Chandra Das and Satyendra Kumar Das. They called themselves 'Independents' during the twenties but could generally be relied upon to back the government party, as when in 1924 Nazimuddin persuaded an obstinately unwilling Municipality to offer an address of welcome to Lord Lytton, in Dacca for the University Convocation.[67]

After the elections of 1925, Nazimuddin's ability to control the board was sensibly weakened, partly by the outcome of the elections themselves, but even more by the pattern of events in the wider world. The ousted commissioner, Sitanath Dey Sarkar, staged a comeback to the board in the election along with a few newcomers with anti-British Raj attitudes. Among these new board members were Dr. Bama Charan Chakravarty, Birendra Nath Bose, Janaki Ballav Dutta, Gokul Chandra Das and Umesh Chandra Dutta.[68]

They were supported by Satish Chandra Sarkar, who was a long-standing Swarajist. The anti-government party was strengthened by people like Moulvi Abdul Aziz, Bhagabat Prasanna Saha Sankhanidhi and Moulvi Abul Hasanath Ahmed who wavered in their loyalties to Nazimuddin.[69] The support of the two ex-officio members was of little help to Nazimuddin in running the Municipality's affairs, as the average official attendance in the meetings was no more than 30 per cent annually, whereas the non-official attendance was over 60 per cent.[70] Besides, the unity and co-operation between Hindus and Muslims during the Khilafat - non-co-operation period had broken down in recrimination and suspicion everywhere in India. But in Bengal the open antagonism of the Hindu bhadralok to the establishment of Dacca University and its Muslim Hall,[71] the attempt by Surendra Nath Bannerjee to dispense with separate electorates at local self-government level, and the straightforwardly provocative motion to prevent the slaughter of cattle introduced by Amulya Dhone Addy provided particular points of conflict at both the elite and popular level. It was easy for communalist Muslims to portray Surendra Nath's proposals as a foreshadowing of Ram Raj.[72] The vigorous effort by the Swarajists led by C. R. Das to win over the Muslims to the nationalist cause by a fairer distribution of the loaves and fishes of government employment broke down: the focussing upon communal percentages and entitlements made the task of communalists easier rather than more difficult, especially after C.R.Das' early death. The action of government in supporting the various Muslim communalist groups and associations in their campaign for the reservation to Muslims of a larger share of government jobs served merely to harden attitudes. Both the Hindu and the Muslim press wrote in increasingly provocative and violent terms and on 2 April 1926 communal riots broke out in Calcutta, the immediate cause being the playing of music before a mosque by the annual procession of the Arya Samaj, which were to spread to many other parts of Bengal, with savage communal killings in Bakarganj and Tippera for example.[73]

Riots occurred in Dacca too in 1926 but in much less serious form. It has been alleged that during the riots leaders of both the Hindu and the Muslim communities tried to advance their political cause by provoking violence,[74] a relative of the Nawab family, Khwaja Abdul Hafiz, Nazimuddin's cousin, being one of the organisers of the riots on the Muslim side.[75] Even so, the disturbances in Dacca were

more like an outbreak of football hooliganism than a true communal riot. One reason for this seems to have been that in Dacca Municipality separate electorates had never been introduced.

Ambitious politicians with an eye to the provincial legislature used the municipal elections as vigorously as in other towns, and the board became the stage for far more actors and action than the city needed. But whereas in the Bengal Legislature the nationalist movement was divided by communal bitterness and separatism, institutionalized in the electoral system, in Dacca, with its joint electorates, aspiring candidates had to maintain at least a facade of communal goodwill. There was suspicion and ill-will, but even after the 1926 disturbances regular appeals to the ideal of harmony were voiced. Thus in May of that year in an address of welcome from the Board to Mrs Sarojini Naidu, the vice-chairman, Keshab Chandra Banerjee, categorically denied that any ill feeling existed between the two communities in Dacca. 'We are happy to be able to put on record' he said, 'that in these unfortunate days of communal tension, we, Hindus and Moslems, are living together at Dacca in unbroken amity and friendship. Indeed, mutual cordiality between the two sister communities, is deep and pleasant, and civic peace, profound. May God bless us with a long and uninterrupted continuation of this state of neighbourly charity, good-will and understanding'.[76]

In July 1926 the effort at mutual accommodation was carried even further by the chairman, Nazimuddin, in his address of welcome to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. He not only proclaimed the slogan of Hindu-Muslim amity, but went so far as to speak approvingly of Malaviya's communal, socio-religious movement for Sudhi and Sangathan, declaring them not to be antagonistic towards other communities.[77]

This was the only time when Nazimuddin was to be found in an action - here the signing of the address to Malaviya - which had anti-British implications. Earlier in 1925, he had disagreed with the vice-chairman about presenting an address to the poet - nationalist Rabindranath Tagore, which praised his literary contributions to nationalism and communal harmony, and his courage in renouncing his Knighthood, that 'British Imperial honour', and the commissioners had gone ahead, without him, to welcome the poet.[78] And in 1928 he strongly opposed the demand of the members that the municipal offices

should be closed on 3 February 1928, the day of the Simon Commission's landing in Bombay, refusing 'to drag politics into the Municipality's administration'. But despite the articulate protest of Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das, Moulvi Abul Hasanath and Abdul Jaffar Ansari, the main body of commissioners had their way and closed the offices in protest, as the Swarajist commissioner Satish Chandra Sarkar put it, at ' a flagrant denial of the Indians' right to self-determination'.[79] S.C. Sarkar was vigorously supported by Sitanath Dey Sarkar, Umesh Chandra Datta, Gokul Chandra Das, Birendra Nath Bose and Bama Charan Chakravarti who declared that it was impossible for the Municipality to be a silent spectator of the Commission's arrival and to stand outside politics on an issue upon which both the Congress and the Muslim League were unanimous.[80]

Despite the fact that the Congress and League were united in denunciation of the all-white Simon Commission, the rift with Nazimuddin and his loyalists in 1928 must be seen as a sign that a definite gap was opening up between the Hindu and Muslim commissioners in Dacca, as the election campaign of that year got under way. (Certainly the anti-British stance of Satish Chandra Sarkar, the Principal of the Dacca National College or Jagannath College, is to be seen as part of his election campaign).[81] The communal rift was visible in issues such as addresses of welcome, but also in such minor matters as the choice of a municipal polling station. In 1928, for example, the Muslim commissioners suddenly found that the Naba Kumar High School, overwhelmingly Hindu, was quite inappropriate as a polling station for the Muslim dominated Ward VI, though it had been so used for years. Nazimuddin tried to secure a compromise, but could not prevent the matter being taken to a vote: Moulvi Abdul Aziz, seconded by Moulvi Abdul Jabbar Ansari, proposed the Lunatic Asylum, and Babu Umesh Chandra Datta, seconded by Sitanath Dey Sarkar, proposed the High School. Six Muslims, including Nazimuddin, voted for the Asylum, but their motion was defeated and that of the Hindus was carried. Signficantly neither Pyarilal Das nor Satyendra Kumar Das had voted in support of Nazimuddin.[82]

Nazimuddin's defeat on this petty issue was seized upon by the Muslim monthly Jagoran as opportunity to denounce his useless chairmanship. He had failed to look after the interests of the Muslims of Dacca, and while he had been in office Muslim majority

areas had been neglected while Hindu areas were attended to. In Muslim areas 'open drains, dirty and dark streets, awful noise of nightsoil carts and their obnoxious smell prove the failure of local self-government in Dacca'.[83] Jagoran concluded that the chairman was a puppet in the Hindu commissioners' hands. Though they formed a majority on the board, the Hindu commissioners had chosen a Muslim chairman because 'they can always escape direct criticism and use the chairman to obtain private water taps, street lighting, clean streets and street hydrants ... The Muslims despite their aristocracy, respectability and government support do not achieve anything unless they desperately try to attract the authority's attention'. The editor went on to explain that the Muslim chairman provided good services for the Hindus because the wealthy Hindu moneylenders were ever ready to lend money not only to him but to his relations and friends. But as the Muslims were poor as well as opposed to the taking of interest by money-lending, 'the chairman decided that they (the Muslims) deserved only dark, dirty and unhygienic streets'.[84]

Jagoran also went on to accuse the chairman of a particular crime, that of supporting a Hindu of Narinda who 'illegally claimed a portion of the Narinda Muslim graveyard as his private property.' It was the chairman's cousin Syed Abdul Hafiz who had displayed his sympathy for the Muslims, and who deserved their thanks as the dispute over the graveyard had been 'fortunately solved in favour of the Muslims' through his skilful negotiations. The paper explained the chairman's 'shameful behaviour against his own community' as the result of Nazimuddin's indebtedness to this money-lending Hindu family of Narinda. The paper concluded with an impassioned appeal to the Muslim voters to unite and send up worthy Muslim commissioners in the next election in July, 1928, who should unite to look after Muslim welfare in the city.[85]

Communalism was not one sided, however, and that the Hindu commissioners no longer wanted any Muslim chairman - potential puppet or not - was made quite clear after the election. At the board's first meeting on 24 February 1930 the old tradition of shared office was thrown overboard, Satish Chandra Sarkar (Swarajist) being elected chairman and Satyendra Kumar Das (Independent), vice-chairman against Khan Bahadur Nawabzada K.M.Afzal (Khwaja Yousuff's son) and the loyalist zamindar, Sachinandan Das. What particularly shocked

Khwaja Afzal was that such 'staunch government supporters' as Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das, MBE, Rai Bahadur Keshab Chandra Banerjee and Satyendra Kumar Das had not hesitated to vote for the radical S.C. Sarkar.[86]

Sarkar proved too radical even for his supporters, however, for he not only believed in complete Swaraj but was openly sympathetic to Sri Sangha and Anushilan, both organizations active in Dacca which were regarded by moderates as well as government as terrorist bodies.[87] He persuaded most of the commissioners and the municipal staff to perform a complete hartal on 15 April 1930 as a gesture of civil disobedience in response to the call of the All India Congress Committee. That gesture was part of a province-wide campaign of picketing, strikes and violence directed against the British Government, on an unprecedented scale. In response, government outlawed the Bengal Congress 'with all its affiliated organisations',[88] arrested many leaders and stationed punitive police 'in areas where the terrorists were most active' while the bhadralok Hindus were collectively fined for the maintenance of the police.[89] The riots which then broke out in Dacca from 24 May 1930 destroyed the communal harmony at all levels of politics. Hindus blamed the Muslims for loss of Hindu lives and property. They also accused the British Government of abdicating 'in favour of the hooligans for several days and several nights in the unhappy city'.[90] Ananda Chandra Roy, the famous old lawyer, a leader of the constitutionalist Hindus and one-time municipal chairman of Dacca, wrote to a member of the Executive Council that Dacca 'was in the hands of the rowdies for several days and nights just as we read in history about the sack of Delhi by Nadirshah' and this before the 'very eyes' of the police.[91] According to the Hindus, the police instigated the Muslim rioters to loot and burn Hindu shops, while the press was gagged so that no important news incriminating the Muslims could come out. It was also claimed that the atrocities were committed in the name of the Nawab of Dacca. K.C. Neogy, the Member of the Legislative Council for the Dacca rural constituency, stated that according to many eye-witnesses the oppressed villagers of Rohitpur about five miles away from Dacca were visitied by the Nawab of Dacca, the Nawab's brother, Khwaja Nasrullah, and Craig, the Deputy Inspector General of Police, a few days after the riots. Craig asked them whether the people wanted Gandhi Raj or British Raj. Many of the frightened villagers said they wanted

British Raj. Craig then asked them to shout 'British-Raj-Ki-Jai' and 'Nawab - Bahadur - Ki-Jai'. People, anticipating more oppression unless they obeyed this order, cried Victory to both the British Raj and the Nawab of Dacca. The police, however, arrested a few well known Muslim rioters as a gesture of the government's neutrality in the communal riots and 'triumphantly entered the city of Dacca' shouting from the launch on the river, Buriganga, 'British Raj-Ki-Jai' and 'Nawab Bahadur-Ki-Jai'.[92]

Ananda Chandra Roy demanded justice from the government. Abdul Halim Ghuznavi (member of the Legislative Assembly for the Dacca Division, Mohammedan Rural) defended both the government and the Muslim leaders by producing a counter report sent to him with the concurrence of the Nawab of Dacca, of Khan Bahadur Alauddin Ahmed ('respectable Muslim' and zamindar), Khwaja Shahabuddin (Nazimuddin's brother), Khan Bahadur Zahirul Huq (zamindar), Moulvi Naimuddin ('respectable Muslim') and two constitutionalist Hindus of Dacca, Srish Chandra Chatterjee (local pleader, one-time vice-chairman of the Dacca Khilafat Committee as well as a member of the Dacca District Congress Committee) and P. K.Basu Bar-at-Law.[93] The report accused the Hindu Mahasabha leaders and the Hindu Press (the Amritabazar Patrika and The East Bengal Times in particular) of 'surcharging the atmosphere' with 'loud lies' against the Muslim community. The Dacca riots of 1930 were not 'a one-sided affair' as the Hindus maintained, for the Muslims of Dacca had been provoked by the Hindus as in 1926. The Mahasabha leaders prepared the ground by threatening the Muslims for their indifference towards the civil disobedience movement and when the riots broke out the Muslims suffered more loss in terms of life than did the Hindus.[94] Ghuznavi, upholding the Muslim view, maintained that the police had not neglected their duties but that 'they were absolutely helpless due to the situation created by the Hindu Mahasabha and by the civil disobedience movement'. Neogy, to find out the truth of the matter, then moved a resolution urging the Governor General in Council to publish the correspondence that had passed between the Government of India and the Government of Bengal in connection with the Dacca riots, but when put to vote the motion was defeated.[95]

The violence unleashed in May was sufficiently alarming, however, to bring those with landed or business interests back towards their old

alliance with officialdom and the conservative Muslims of the Nawab's party on the board. In Dacca the constitutionalist faction of Pyarilal Das and S. K. Das, with official, nominated and Muslim members turned on Satish Chandra Sarkar and ousted him.[96] With majority support, Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das was elected chairman and Abul Hasanath Vice-chairman - a return to the old pattern of mutual communal accommodation and of non-agitational politics.[97]

The formation of two different boards in the span of one year (1930) was because the triennial pattern of elections to which Dacca was subject as a first class municipality had been thrown right out of phase by legal wranglings, defeated candidates instituting litigation and the courts imposing injunctions against the formation of new boards until these election cases had been heard.[98] Thus the election of 1921 had been followed by litigation which prevented the formation of a new board until 1923, by which date the triennial election was due, which put back the constitution of the board until 1924. The next general municipal election occurred in 1925, but litigation and injunctions once more followed. Since the 1928 election results also were challenged by defeated candidates in the courts it was not until February 1930 that a regular new board could be constituted[99] - by which time, as has been seen, the 1930 elections were imminent. Administration was obviously disrupted by all the legal wrangling, many candidates seeming quite indifferent to that duty, and the continuation of the old boards with defeated members still in office scarcely reinforced the idea of democratic control. This was a serious problem in Dacca, but not one unique to that city, as the Administration Report for Bengal, 1930-31 makes clear:

> 'It should be noticed that though triennial elections from a common starting point should have resulted in general elections throughout the province in the same year, these were trailing out to an average year by year. The reason lies in the tendency to delay reconstruction of the board over the formalities of election and the intervention of the Civil Courts. The last Dacca Municipal Board, for instance, remained in office for over five years before reconstruction could be completed'.[100]

The overthrow of Satish Chandra Sarkar by the alliance of Muslim members of the Dacca Municipality and the old guard of the Government party, was paralleled, so Broomfield argues, by a successful

campaign by British officialdom and Muslims in combination to destroy bhadralok political mastery in Bengal. From 1930 five Muslim headed Ministries in succession held office, all of them, 'provided with firm backing by the officials and European non-officials'.[101] In the next six years their strength was exerted to change the social balance in favour of the Muslim community with legislation affecting elementary education, peasant indebtedness, and, what was significant for Dacca Municipality, local self-government. The Bengal Municipal Act of 1932 built upon the provisions of the Calcutta Corporation Act of 1922 and offered new opportunities to other Bengal municipalities. The Act extended the franchise and did so to women too. It reduced the proportion of appointed commissioners from the one-third fixed in 1884 to one fifth, and also relaxed the official control over the election of chairmen, for which previously the District Magistrate's approval had been required, and exempted municipal budgets from the need for government sanction, except where a municipality was in debt. The Act did, however, empower the Divisional Commissioner to intervene as guardian of the public interest either to compel a municipality to participate in joint schemes of public works, to take over such services as drainage, sewerage, lighting or water-supply in cases of persistent mismanagement, or in more serious cases of default or mismanagement to dissolve a board and order fresh elections: as a last resort the local government could even supersede the commissioners altogether. The Act also provided that the elections should be four yearly instead of triennial, and most important, not only did it enlarge the electorate but it provided for reservation of seats for minority communities, though not for separate electorates.[102]

These two measures forced Muslims everywhere to think communally and nowhere more so than in Dacca, the real capital of Muslim - dominated Eastern Bengal, in which Muslims found themselves a minority in absolute numbers and even more of a minority in terms of qualified voters.[103] The aspiring Muslim politicians of Dacca were frightened by the thought that unless, within the Municipality, they were declared a minority and so entitled to reservation of seats, they would be swamped by the Hindus in all municipal elections. Khwaja Abdus Salim, a zamindar and a cousin of Khwaja Nazimuddin, therefore, on behalf of the Dacca District Muslim Federation of which he was the secretary, organized a deputation consisting of three East Bengali lawyers and three zamindars including himself. Of these M. Ahmad, zamindar

of Kartikpur, was an ex-MLC and R.R. Khan, the leader of the deputation, was an MLC and Deputy President of Bengal Legislative Council.[104] On 19 January 1933 the deputation met Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy, Minister for Local Self-Government, with a request that 'out of 17 seats proposed to be filled by election, under the present arrangement at least 7 may be reserved for the Muslims'.[105]

The deputation explained that according to the census of 1931, of the total municipal population of 138,518 in Dacca, only 57,764 were Muslims, a little over 40 per cent, while in some of the wards the Muslims were in such a hopeless minority that unless government exercised its discretion in their favour and reserved seats on a population basis, the deputation feared 'Muslims will be no where in the Municipal election'.[106]

Roy, a loyalist minister in a Muslim Ministry, was ready to accept the proposal which became the official plan for Dacca, there being seventeen elected, four nominated thenceforth, with seven of the elected seats reserved for Muslims.[107] This was not a decision which the Hindus on the board were willing to accept without question. The Municipal Commissioner Birendra Kumar Bose at once prepared a counter proposal. On his initiative the Dacca Peoples' Association, a loose association of Hindu professionals and a few landholders, forwarded a proposal which would have enlarged the Municipality to twenty-four elected members, reserving ten seats for Muslims. This would not have affected Muslims adversely - their proportion in the board would have been marginally increased, indeed - and was proposed as an answer to the growth of the city's population[108] - but it aroused much Muslim suspicion and hostility, all the Muslims joining ex-officio and nominated members to turn it down. With one extra member added for wards III, IV and VI, the board's elected membership rose only to seventeen, with seven Muslim reserved seats as asked for by Khwaja Abdus Salim's deputation. The new structure was approved by a clear majority at a special meeting of the Municipality.[109]

Although the franchise had been extended to women, or rather to women ratepayers, and the property qualification had been lowered from the payment of annual municipal rates of one rupee eight annas to one rupee four annas, and while matriculates as well as degree holders were given the vote, the size of the electorate as recorded

by the Municipality did not grow remarkably as compared to the electorate of 1921. The total number of voters in the municipal area was recorded as 10,580 in 1933 as opposed to 8,515 in 1921.[110]

This new electorate went to the polls on 27 March 1933 and showed more interest than for some years past, the percentage of voting rising from 58.6 in 1930 to a very creditable 75.5 in 1933.[111] Though no candidate stood on the Congress ticket, since Congress in Dacca was still a banned organization,[112] the effect of the Congress campaign of the last two years in mobilizing active support was still visible and the return of Girish Chandra Das, a Hindu Mahasabhaite, and of six Muslim commissioners with Muslim League affiliations, indicates that as usual any political campaign was likely to elicit communal responses. But if the high turn-out at the polls reflected national political excitement, this did not mean that municipal politics were tied to or controlled by regional and national parties. There was still a large element of purely local politics and ambitions pursued by men who did not look beyond the confines of Dacca and its hinterland. The use of the Ratepayers' Association as an instrument of political mobilization and the election in 1933 of more professional men than ever before - two well-known doctors (Dr. Hrishi Kesh Dhar and Dr. Shubal Chandra Das), two lawyers (Umesh Chandra Datta and Ananda Chandra Nandi) and one teacher (Khagendra Narayan Mitra) - does suggest, however, a shift within the Hindu community away from land or business towards the professional middle class, indicative of some widening of horizons.[113]

One feature of the nineteen thirties elections was the election of Pyarilal Das to succeed S.C. Sarkar as chairman in 1930, for it inaugurated an unbroken succession of Hindu chairmen at Dacca and marked the end of the convention, which had been held until 1922 (with occasional gaps), of alternating communal office holding in the Municipality. However, if after Nazimuddin's chairmanship no Muslim would again hold that office before Independence, Muslims did hold the vice-chairmanship, the first elected being Moulvi Abul Hasanath Ahmed, in office from 1930 to 1935 and then again from 1938 to 1945.[114]

This might suggest that the old inter-communal accommodation was still in being, though in modified form. But Hasanath was not a Muslim in the same mould as Nazimuddin or Nawab Yousuff. The 1930 s were

characterized by a continuous rivalry between the representatives of the old Nawab or loyalist grouping, Khwaja Nasrullah, Khwaja Ismail, Syed Saheb-e-Alam and Moulvi Abul Hasanath and his supporters. After Nazimuddin's departure the Moulvi challenged the leadership of the Khwajas on the board, twice defeating them in the struggle to secure the vice-chairmanship. The rivalry became particularly intense after the 1945 election when Syed Saheb-e-Alam, a nephew of Nawab Bahadur joined the board and carried off the vice-chairmanship. Abul Hasanath had a strong personal dislike for him, regarding him as no better than a thug, whereas he generally adopted a merely contemptuous attitude to the brash and upstart family.[115]

The rise to a position of power of Abul Hasanath, a landholder, a well-known social worker and a municipal commissioner since before our period, and his rivalry with the Nawab family reflects a number of shifts in local politics. Abul Hasanath was a member of the Krishak Proja Party,[116] the more radical offshoot of the Nikhil Banga Samiti which had emerged during the contest for the presidency of the Samiti when Sir Abdur Rahim resigned in 1934 to take up the Speakership of the Central Assembly. That contest between Khan Bahadur Abdul Momen of Burdwan and A.K.Fazlul Huq was in part a regional contest between the Calcutta, West Bengal, often non Bengali, Muslim leadership and men from Dacca and Eastern Bengal, and in part a class contest between the older landed and mercantile leadership and the newer middle class, more populist politicians. In the provincial elections of 1937 it was perhaps symbolic that Fazlul Huq won his seat at Patuakhali by defeating Khwaja Nazimuddin and did so not by appealing to elite connections but by promising Dal-Bhat - three square meals a day - to the new peasant electorate of Muslims and lower caste Hindus.[117]

In the same provincial elections Abul Hasanath had stood for the Narayanganj constituency,[117A] but had been defeated by Abdus Shaheed, who had links with the Nawab family.[118] In 1938, however, he secured election as vice-chairman of the Municipality, defeating the Nawabi candidate with the help of Moulvi Allah Bux, an earlier rebel against the Nawab connection, and of a group of Hindu professional men - the four doctors, S.K.Sen, J.C.Das, R.S.Saha Banik and H.K.Dhar together with three other Hindus N.M.Dutt and P.C.Basak, lawyers and H.K.Das, a landowner. With their help the opposition, led by Khwaja Muhammad

Ismail - which included Abdus Sobhan, Mirza Abdul Kader Sardar, Choudhury Golam Kader, Nuruddin Ahmed and on occasion the scheduled caste man Dhananjoy Roy - was regularly defeated.[119]

It might seem plausible to connect the fortunes of Fazlul Huq and the Krishak Proja Party at provincial level, with those of Abul Hasanath within the Dacca municipal board - and those of Nazimuddin perhaps with those of the Nawab connections there. Looking at a still wider national stage one could then note the emergence in the mid-thirties, under the nominal leadership of the Nawab of Dacca, of the Bengal United Muslim Party in which Suhrawardy was the active element, and the transformation of this upper class party into the Muslim League after Jinnah's visit to Calcutta later in 1936.[120] Fazlul Huq refused to join the League, however, preferring to campaign in 1937 as a Krishak Proja Party leader, appealing across communal lines.[121] But of course to do that would be to ignore the fact that later / that year Fazlul Huq joined the All India Muslim League at the Lucknow Session, became President of the Bengal Muslim League with Suhrawardy as Secretary, and formed his first Ministry with League support. (Huq's supporters included loyalists like Sir B.P. Singh Roy, a few constitutionalist Congress members, some scheduled caste and Independent members, some Muslim Leaguers, but also some Krishak Projas, together with the European group.)[122] In that Ministry, moreover, he found room for Nazimuddin, returned at a bye-election, while Nawab Habibullah Bahadur of Dacca served as his Minister for Local Self-Government from 1938 to 1941.[123] At every level in Bengal politics, factionalism, the politics of personality, was rife. To look for the influence of parties and programmes as a guide to the politics of / even a major Municipality is therefore premature. J.D.Tyson, the District Magistrate of Dacca in 1937, recorded a nice example of the looseness with which party costume fitted. Asking a candidate in the provincial elections about his party affiliations, he was told 'I am the Proja Party nominee, - Fazl-ul-Huq's party: but of course I have never been a member of that party, nor am I yet: I had to seek nomination from that party to secure some party backing , though I had wanted to stand as The League Candidate, I was not successful in getting nomination from the League'. Tyson adds his own comment: 'that sort of man will obviously not follow Fazl-ul-Huq in the House any further than suits himself'.[124] How steady Abul Hasanath was in his loyalty to Krishak Proja Party is not known - but one may doubt

his radical commitment when it is remembered that he was zamindar of Becharam Dewry and a member of the Dacca District Muslim Federation - an association led by the Nawab family of Dacca.[125]

When Abul Hasanath defeated the Nawabi candidate for the vice-chairmanship in Dacca Municipality in 1938 with Hindu help, the Minister for Local Self-Government was Nawab Habibullah - powerless it seems to intervene in the politics of the Municipality on behalf of his family and allies.[125A]

The tensions between communities, which grew as the Huq Ministry pushed through a series of measures unfavourable to the bhadralok and spilled over increasingly into rioting, did not show themselves in any clear cut communal split within the Municipality. The absence of separate electorates still made it necessary for candidates to seek cross-community support, and on a number of occasions leaders deliberately came together on peace committees to check notes in the early 1940 s or to organize gruel kitchens for the famine stricken people in 1943.[126] Within the narrow scope of the Municipality personal politics often overrode communal as well as party politics.

Party labels might be worn by those aspiring to move on from local to provincial politics - in the 1937 elections six men who had seen service in the Dacca Municipality, Nawabzada Khwaja Nasrullah, Khwaja Shahabuddin, Birendra Nath Majumdar, Satyendra Kumar Das, Keshab Chandra Banerjee and Monoranjan Banerjee, secured provincial seats, under a variety of labels. It would be difficult to establish, though that any of them secured their seats because they were party men with a party programme to pursue.[127]

In the opposite direction two men entered municipal politics for the first time after establishing their political position at provincial level: Mohammad Ibrahim MA, BL, and Dhananjoy Roy, a scheduled caste representative. Both these men won their seats in 1937 and then found places on the Dacca municipal board later.[128] Roy had joined forces with the radical Krishak Proja leader Nausher Ali in 1937, who took the portfolio of Public Health and Local Self-Government in Huq's first Ministry, and when Ali was ousted from office in 1938, Roy followed him into opposition. This action does seem to have a more strictly

political basis, for as Broomfield points out, Huq's failure to satisfy the more extreme demands for rural reform of the scheduled caste party and militant wing of the Proja party had led by this date to the withdrawal of their support and flirtations with the Congress opposition.[129] On the municipal board Roy tended to vote against the S.K.Das - Abul Hasanath group.[130]

At the last municipal elections in our period, those of 1945, the S.K.Das - Abul Hasanath group was defeated. The popular lawyer Bimalananda Das Gupta, took the chairmanship by a large margin, while Saheb-e-Alam, who had replaced Mohammad Ismail as the Nawab family spokesman, secured the post of vice-chairman.[131] Was this defeat of Abul Hasanath, a moderate Krishak-Proja man, linked with the overthrow of Fazlul Huq as Chief Minister in March 1943?[132] Or with the subsequent rise in importance of Nazimuddin and the more conservative wing of the Muslim League?[133] It might seem so, but, as always, the revival of the Khwaja faction in the Municipality was also due to quite personal reasons. At the death of Nawab Salimullah in 1915, his heir Khwaja Habibullah was 'very young', inexperienced in politics and without much influence within the family. For a number of years older, more ambitious members of the Nawab family refused to accept his leadership and engaged in internal faction-fights which certainly weakened the authority of the family in the region. But the political atmosphere, particularly the civil disobedience movement and the communal riots in 1930, strengthened the fear of a 'Hindu Raj' among the Muslims and led the contesting members of the family to close their ranks.[134] In the provincial elections of 1937 the Nawab family worked for a United Muslim Party, while the Khwajas themselves belonged to the 'Jinnah faction' of the Muslim League.[135] The leadership of the Khwajas, however, was still given by Nazimuddin and his brother Shahabuddin,[136] who were more experienced and interested in politics than the Nawab. But by the force of family tradition Habibullah also entered politics and was given the portfolio of Local Self-Government in Huq's Ministry in 1938. By 1939 he not only had consolidated his position within the family but also in the region to such an extent that in a by-election in 1939 he successfully brought into the Assembly a member of the family to fill the seat which lay vacant by the death of another Khwaja. The new Khwaja, a Muslim League candidate, who was 'distinguished neither by influence nor personality'[137] scored a landslide victory

over his 'able'and 'well known' opponent who, having failed 'to secure the League's support, had set himself up under ''Proja'' auspices'[138], and having polled a little over 2,100 votes as against 12,000 by the Nawab's candidate, nearly forfeited his deposit. The result of this election was as Sir J. A. Herbert, the Governor of Bengal, recorded in 1939, 'striking testimony to the influence wielded by the League and the Nawab family in that area'.[139] Although the Nawab failed to secure control of the Dacca Muslim League machine in 1944,[140] by 1945 the Abul Hashim group within the league had been thrown on the defensive.[141] Abul Hasanath, like many of Abul Hashim's followers in the League regarded the Khwaja faction as communal and reactionary, and at provincial level supported Suhrawardy against Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Khwajas' leader in Calcutta and at this time a Cabinet Minister.[142] The defeat of Abul Hasanath and the success of Saheb -e-Alam on the Dacca municipal board may be interpreted as a conflict between members of rival parties, but even more plausibly as an example of factional and family politics of a much more localized kind; a reassertion of local leadership and personal alliances of the sort which led Dawson Tyson to assert that 'loyalty has always been a personal matter in India'.[143] The success of the Khwaja party in 1945 municipal elections elicited a violent reaction from the dispossessed, Das and Hasanath gathering a group of nine malcontents who consistently opposed the new chairman, and by their effective block voting made the smooth functioning of the municipality very difficult.[144]

The chairman, Das Gupta, retaliated by forming a 'Committee for efficient administration' consisting of eight men on whose loyalty he felt he could rely. This was criticized by P. C. Ghosh, a teacher and articulate spokesman of the opposition, who accused the chairman of forming a 'Party Committee'.[145] This was true enough, for Das Gupta appears to have been seeking to weld a loose body of supporters into a regular party, answering the nine block votes of the opposition with a block of nine of his own ruling party, with the balance tipped by two Muslim members, Haji Sharif Hussain and Haji Lal Miah, who joined forces with his group.[146] These two men, were mahalla sardars and so patronized by the Dacca Nawab family, to whom all the sardars traditionally looked up. It was only natural that they should join hands with Khwaja Saheb-e-Alam and Das Gupta.

The factions of the municipal board in Dacca thus continued to cut across communal lines. Although Dacca had the reputation of being a breeding ground for communal politics, the municipal commissioners often gave communalism second place to factionalism. So though there was a Hindu majority in the Municipality throughout the whole period it did not lead to uncontrolled bitterness, and though the pattern of alternating Hindu and Muslim chairmen and vice-chairmen broke down, as has been seen, there never was a period during 1921-47 in which both offices were monopolized by one community. And even during the life of the last board before Partition, when communalism throughout India touched new depths of enmity and violence, none of the hatred outside was reflected in the municipal meetings. This was all the more remarkable as Saheb-e-Alam had the reputation for being an active communalist outside it.[147] On one of the rare occasions when it might have seemed that the Hindu majority was imposing its will on the Muslim minority - they rejected a Muslim request for the proceedings to be conducted in Bengali rather than in English - it was almost certainly more a matter of taking pride in their English education than of forcing a communal issue. Five of the nine Muslim members did not speak English and the Hindus were merely demonstrating the traditional bhadralok contempt for 'illiterates'. The other four Muslim members, who regarded themselves as bhadralok, gave tacit support to their Hindu colleagues by their silence.[148]

The conflicts which did engage the attention of the municipal commissioners were not ideological but practical - the divisions of such spoils of office as the award of contracts for the supply of fodder to the municipal bullocks, for street lighting, road making and repair or for the power of appointment and promotion of municipal staff. If these were at times tinged with communal feeling it was because the economic and educational dominance of the Hindu community so limited the opportunities open to Muslims.[149] It is striking, however, that where major communal or social interests were at stake the mahalla sardars, such as Moti Sardar and Abdul Kader Sardar, traditionally loyal to the Khwajas and popularly supposed to be the organisers of many of the communal riots, did not hesitate to align themselves with the Hindus on the board. And in the same way the sophisticated, English educated Hindu bhadralok readily joined forces with the narrowly educated merchants and mahalla sardars in order to

safeguard their interests. When it came to the manipulation of property taxation through their control of the Assessment Review Committee which operated from 1940 to 1945, men like Dr Hrishi Kesh Dhar (Congress), Dr Jogesh Chandra Das (Mahsabha), Dr Radha Syam Banik (Independent) and Mirza Abdul Kader Sardar (Muslim League and propreitor of the Lion Theatre - now a cinema) readily worked together very closely.[150] Their personal interests as owners of valuable urban properties led them to cooperate in manipulating the assessment in favour of the wealthy ratepayers in a way which cut across all ties of party, faction and community - even in years marked by virulent communal rioting in the city, in 1940, 1941, 1942 and 1944. The local Hindu vernacular magazine Chabuk, (the whip) commented acidly on the corrupt and selfish elites who ran the Municipality and their readiness to sink all differences when it came to assessing property.[151]

And where the conflicts and accommodations were not mundane and mercenary they revolved round personalities rather than principles, as in the squabbles engendered by that peculiar form of municipal patronage, the naming of city streets. The naming of streets after individuals in recognition of their generosity in donating funds, installing public street lighting or bearing the cost of water hydrants, and more frequently in recognition of the 'valuable services' to the community performed by influential municipal commissioners, was a valuable element in the patronage of the board. (The value of the services rendered was determined by the commissioners themselves, of course, and not by the voters or public.) The honours system was initially used either to reward local worthies or to acknowledge the blessings of British rule as embodied in this or that Viceroy, Lieutenant-Governor, Governor, Divisional Commissioner or District Magistrate. In Dacca city an impressive number of streets still in fact bear European names.[152] But the attitude of the commissioners changed with the political circumstances of the day: as the intervention of officials was relaxed and the need to please them ceased to be imperative the apotheosis of a street name was more and more rarely accorded. By this period no European had become worthy of a street name. It was now the turn of nationalist heroes to secure these addresses of honour.[153]

There was occasional conflict within the board as to the choice

of nationalist hero - as there was over decisions to offer a civic reception to such political leaders. The real acrimony, however, was often over much more parochial figures, especially when the choice could be interpreted as a communal affront. Thus when it was proposed to rename Nurpur Lane after Lal Mohan Poddar in return for a donation of Rs 1,000, the objection raised by commissioners Abdul Hafiz and Moulvi AllahBux was not to the civic indignity of thus selling Dacca's honour for money, nor to the affront to class justice in thus honouring a money-lender, but rather to the obliteration of Muslim local history which the change involved. The Hindu majority suffered no doubts on any of these scores, however, and in 1923 Lal Mohan Poddar was duly immortalized.[154]

Similar objections arose from the Muslims in 1939 when commissioner Biren Bose tried and succeeded in his proposal to change Mir Ata Road and Mughal Tooly Road into Rajani Bose Road and Biren Bose Road respectively - a happy combination of family and self-glorification, Rajani Bose being his father.[155] In the same year Subal Chandra Das, another municipal commissioner, faced even stronger Muslim opposition, from within and without the board, but succeeded nevertheless in renaming part of Lalbagh Road, 'which commemorate the ancient, historical existence of the Mughal Emperors', after himself.[156]

There may be some truth in the Muslim accusation of Hindu communalism playing a role in this changing of Muslim place names. Certainly there was no case recorded, at least during the period under review, of changing any road name from Hindu to Muslim.

To the very end of the period, during war, famine and political change of unparalleled magnitude, the horizons of those who were in charge of the civic affairs of East Bengal's only city remained narrowly circumscribed. Local honours, local patronage, local graft, the maintenance of traditional local power structures such as those of the Nawab family, the great Hindu merchant bankers or the humbler mahalla sardars, these were the real concern of the municipal commissioners. Although during the forties the Municipality of Dacca contained a broader social spectrum than before, those incoming commissioners who were lower on the social scale did not bring a

new style of politics with them. They identified their interests with those higher up the social ladder and joined in the factional games which had traditionally been played in the Municipality.

On 19 November, 1947 - three months after the Partition of India - the new Government of East Pakistan superseded 'the Dacca Municipal Committee' on the ground that the commissioners were 'incompetent and in persistent default in the performance of their duties'.[157] Perhaps this supersession of a municipality run by a Hindu majority was bound to follow in a Muslim majority state created for the Muslims. But the accusations levelled against it were not unfounded or unjust. Yet the performance of the Dacca municipal board in the Partition period was no worse than it had been in the twenties and thirties, especially if account is taken of the violent Hindu-Muslim riots that plagued the city in this period. It maintained the basic services, despite the fact that it undercollected and over or mis-spent its resources. It provided a pool within which small fish could pretend to be whales - or rather sharks - in pursuit of a variety of financial mouthfuls. But it did not create a sense of civic pride in the citizens of Dacca and on the whole elicited little sense of civic duty in those who directed or served it.

Notes and References

1. See Haider in A City, 92-94.
   See also The District Municipal Improvement Act (Bengal Act 111 of 1864), paras VI, VII, VIII, IX and XVI, pp.218 - 220.

2. See W.H.Morris-Jones, Parliament in India (London, 1957), 36.
   Professor Morris-Jones noted that the 'concentration of powers in the hands of the district officer was so great and his sharing of these powers so rare and minimal that it was scarcely surprising that he should have been called the 'man-bap' (mother and father) of the area'.

3. Tinker discussed the overpowering official influence on the municipalities of India during the pre-election days. See Tinker, The Foundations, 38-39.
   Despite the official domination of the boards, the decisions, as S.U.Ahmed recorded, were taken on majority votes. Ahmed, however, did not mention any occasion when a nominated commissioner opposed the District Magistrate or the Divisional Commissioner's resolution before the elective principle was introduced in 1884. See S.U.Ahmed,'The History', 370.

4. Najmul Abedin, Local Administration and politics in modernizing societies, Bangladesh and Pakistan (Dacca, 1973), 41.
   Abedin's 'respectable persons' of the town were the same people whom Broomfield described as 'Bhadralok'. See Broomfield, 1-20.

5. The District Magistrate's unique powers and position were discussed in more detail in William Hunter, The Indian Empire (London,1892), 513; Ralph Braibanti, 'The Civil Service of Pakistan: A Theoretical Analysis' in South Atlantic Quarterly, vol. LVIII, No 2, 1959. 272; Abedin, 114-122; and Roland Hunt and John Harrison (eds), The District Officer in India (London, 1980), 77-93.

6. These handpicked members belonged to the elite class in the towns. The term elite has been used here in a broad sense, to include people who were influential in the society either because of their wealth or western education or religious, social or political leadership. For definitions and classification of elites see Edmund Leach and S.N.Mukherjee (eds) Elites in South Asia (Cambridge, 1970), IX.

7. S.U.Ahmed,'The History', 171.
   Act II of 1873 provided for the elections of the chairman and vice-chairman for some large towns 'at the discretion of the Government'.

8. S.U.Ahmed,'The History', 373 - 374.

9. Ibid., 370.
   The aspiring middle class looked upon the municipal boards as possible sources of power.
   See Misra, Administrative History, 603.

   In Dacca, peoples' aspirations were backed by the local press and official domination of the municipal boards was regularly

and vigorously criticized. These ambitious outsiders also attacked the handpicked non-European commissioners as unrepresentative of and unkind to the majority of the ratepayers, as they were drawn mainly from the big zamindar, mercantile and banking families. See S.U.Ahmed,'The History', 369-370.

10. B.B. Misra, Administrative History, 602.

11. Quoted in ibid.
Lord Ripon was well aware of the hostility or indifference of the officials which frustrated Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 which contained the seed of local self-government (Misra, 602). Ripon also realized that the task of popularizing the municipalities should not be left to the local government officials entirely, because the District Officers would not like to lose their own 'absolute supremacy' in favour of the untrained municipal commissioners. Therefore, the elective principle should be brought to local bodies by the central government - not by local governments.
But the importance of the District Officers was not completely eroded by the Resolutions of 1882, as the provincial governments were to extend the electoral system to any municipality only after consultation with the District Officers and the prominent people of the localities. Despite real official opposition, the wish of the prominent people in favour of elections soon prevailed in many municipalities in Bengal. See Misra, Administrative History, 604-606.

12. S.U.Ahmed,'The History', 385-397.
Like the Governor of Bengal, the Governors of Bombay and of Madras were also opposed to the elective principle. See Misra, Administrative History, 604-606.

13. Misra, Administrative History, 604-606.
By 1885-86 the number of elected commissioners in Bengal municipalities was as large as 1,088 out of the total of 1,995 commissioners. The elective principle's wider application in Bengal was probably the result of Ripon's presence in the province and the Bengali middle class peoples' more articulate demand for it.

14. Tinker, The Foundations, 50.

15. S.U.Ahmed,'The History', 387.

In Dacca the property qualification was payment of municipal tax of one rupee eight annas per annum either directly or indirectly through the landlords. The minimum voting age was 21 and the residence qualification was one year's stay within the municipal area. The voters' qualifications were the same as prospective commissioners'.

16. S.U.Ahmed,'The History', 397.

17. Ibid., 393-394.

18. D.M.P., 30 March 1921; 3 May 1921; 13 June 1921.

In 1884 the majority of elected commissioners were zamindars,

merchants, and bankers; two were lawyers and one was a prominent and 'respectable' Muslim inhabitant of Dacca. See S.U.Ahmed, 'The History', 393-394.

19. See Dhaka Prokash, 8 July 1923, 3; 15 July, 3; 19 August 1923,3. Dacca Ratepayer's Deputation, 20 July 1923; Dhaka Prokash, 25 November, 1923, 3; D.M.P., 1940-41, collection XV, File No 184 refer to a number of cases against the non-law-abiding ratepayers who made illegal constructions on public roads. The cases depended entirely on the subcommittee's report. Some of these cases were dismissed on the grounds of poverty or misunderstanding and some were sent up to the S.D.O.'s Court.

20. S.U.Ahmed, 'The History', 398.

21. Quoted in Broomfield, 45.
Nawab Salimullah's article was published in The Muslim Institute, April - June, vol. i, 1906.
A Muslim political organisation was formed in October 1906, with the name All India Muslim League at a conference convened by Nawab Sir Salimullah at Dacca. Although the Nawab could not persuade this organization to launch a pro-Partition movement (many of its leaders were not from Bengal and had little or no interest in the Partition), nevertheless his effort to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Muslims by remaining loyal to the British Raj now found an organized channel. See Kamruddin Ahmad, A Social History of Bengal (Third edition, Dacca , 1970), chapter 1, 6 (hereafter Bengal).

22. Sumit Sarkar, The Swadeshi Movement In Bengal 1903-1908 (New Delhi, 1973), 401-402.

Lord Curzon, who put administrative efficiency before the fulfilment of the political ambitions of middle class Bengal (mainly the Hindus), doubtless created optimism among some Muslim politicians of Eastern Bengal as Kamruddin Ahmad explains. (See Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, chapter 1, 2-3). The policy antagonized the powerful Hindu bhadralok who felt deprived of their mofussil territory. The East Bengali Hindu politicians also objected because they looked upon Calcutta as their political, cultural and economic centre. The anti-Partition movement launched in 1903 (when the plan for Partition was announced) by various Hindu groups in East and West Bengal took on a communal colour in many places and embittered the relationship between the two communities in Bengal. See Broomfield, 43-44.

22A. When the anti-Partition agitation led by Hindu Congress leaders and the extremist organizations, Juganatar and Anushilan, turned into a mass movement for national liberation, Curzon's successor, Lord Minto, proposed some reforms to please the liberal elements among the Hindu elites by taking some representatives from them into the Legislative Councils. The fears of the Muslims were also kept in mind and therefore, communal representation was also proposed. The reforms of 1909 introduced separate communal representation into The Supreme Legislative Council and so indirectly involved the Municipalities and rural boards in communal politics. The Muslim League demanded separate local representation for the Muslims in 1910 but nothing came of it. On 12 December 1911 the scheme for the reunification of Bengal

was announced in the Delhi durbar which broke Sir Salimullah's 'loyal' heart.
See Broomfield, 40; Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, chapter 1, 3

23. Although the Hindu leaders protested against the introduction of separate electorates, an understanding about communal representation, the Lucknow Pact, was reached in 1916 between Congress and the Muslim League, under the leadership of young Muslim leaders such as Fazlul Huq, so that the two communities could fight jointly against the British. See Broomfield, 114 and Misra, Administrative History, 610.
Some communalist Muslims in Bengal, however, led by Nawab Khan Bahadur Nawab Ali Chowdhury of Mymensingh, 'an old comrade of the Dacca Nawab', left the League in protest at a pact which gave Muslims only 40 per cent of the Bengal seats. Through the Central National Mahomedan Association they kept up pressure on government for 50 per cent of the seats. Uncertainty about the future of the Turkish Khalifa, war time inflation, and the influenza epidemic all added to tension among Muslims which was whipped up by the communal press and erupted in communal riots in Calcutta in September 1918. Under the Franchise (Southborough) Committee's award, Muslims received 45 per cent of the seats in Bengal Legislative Council.
For the riots of 1918 see Broomfield, 121-126.

24. Broomfield, 128.

25. Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918, chapter 1, para. 194, pp. 158-159. See also Misra, Administrative History, 612.

26. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, vol.I, 1930, para. 344, page 304.

27. A.A.R.D.M., 1921 - 22, 1 - 2.

28. See the Notification No 3909 L.S.G.(Local Self-Government), Bengal, Calcutta, 22 August 1921.

29. A.A.R.D.M., 1921 - 22, 2.

30. Dhaka Prokash, 21 September 1921, 3.
See also A.A.R.D.M., 1921-22, 2.

31. A.A.R.D.M., 1921-22, 2 - 3.
Hridaynath Majumdar, 88. Majumdar mentioned Rakhal Chandra Byack as Kristo Sardar Bysack's son. They were 'very wealthy' merchants in Dacca.

See Nazir Hussain, Kingbadantir Dhaka (Dacca of the old days) (Dacca, 1976), 39.
S.K.Das was the son of Revati Mohan Das, very rich banker, zamindar, merchant and owner of a press. S.K.Das installed electric lights on Walter Road at his own cost and renamed a large portion of the road after his father. See N. Hussain, 39.
Keshab Chandra Banerji was a zamindar and later on became a Rai Bahadur . See Thacker's Indian Directory, 1940-41 (General Section,) 37.

32. District Gazetteer, 1912, 181-182;
C.M.Islam, 133; Dani, 117-118.

33. David Cheesman in his thesis on nineteenth century Sind explained how the great Waderos (landlords) of Sind used the institution of charity 'to look the part of a great wadero'. This was almost an obligation for them as 'lavish entertainments and the ostentatious provision of charity to faqirs, beggars, hangers-on and others gave the impression of spectacular wealth and hinted at greatness of soul'. See David Cheesman, 'Rural Power and Debt in Sind in the late Nineteenth Century, 1865-1901' (University of London, Ph.D. thesis, 1980), 105.

34. During the days of non-cooperation, it was considered more heroic to return an honour awarded by the government than to accept it. The Bengali poet and the first Indian Nobel Prize-winner, Rabindranath Tagore, became a political hero too by returning 'his Knighthood to the King Emperor's Viceroy with a contemptuous letter explaining that he could not tolerate such a bauble from a people who were now clamouring with sympathy and subscribing £26,000 for their poor General Dyer, who had just been removed from his command after massacring 379 Indians at the Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar'.
See Geoffrey Moorehouse, Calcutta (Second Impression, London 1972), 193.

35. For the life sketch of Khwaja Yousuff see S.M.Taifoor in A City, 80-82. For the tenure of his vice- hairmanship of Dacca Municipality see Haider, Place Names, 42.

36. Lord Canning appreciated the loyalty of Khwaja Abdul Ghani during the Mutiny for his loyal help to the British against the rebellious Indian sepoys. See District Gazetteer ,1912,48.

37. C.E.Buckland, Bengal Under the Lieutenant-Governors, vol.II (second edition, Calcutta, 1902), 1028. The author also noted that Khwaja Abdul Ghani's 'loyalty to the Crown was promptly shown, whenever opportunity offered'. See Buckland, 1029.

38. At Khwaja Ahsanullah's initiative, the family donated about Rs 4½ lakhs towards providing electric lights in the city. See District Gazetteer , 1912, 182; See also Dani, 118.

39. District Gazetteer , 1912, 182.

40. Haider in A City, 79.

41. District Gazetteer , 1912, 182.
For an eulogy on Abul Ghani and Ahsanullah see Buckland, 1029.

42. District Gazetteer , 1912, 177; Dani, 117-118.

43. Haider in A City, 79.

44. A.A.R.D.M. 1891, 1-2; Buckland, 1029; Haider in A City, 129. Haider noted that both Abdul Ghani and Ahsanullah, the father and the son, were on the same municipal board in 1874-75. Pages 129 - 132 give an interesting picture of the composition of Dacca's municipal board from 1874 to 1965. Despite large gaps and ommissions in the information it is obvious that, during our period and before, there was hardly any board

without any representative of the Khwaja family. See also Haider, Place Names, 42, 45. But Haider's date (1924) for Khwaja Nazimuddin being the chairman of Dacca Municipality is probably a misprint, because Nazimuddin was elected in 1921 as a commissioner and became chairman on 3 March 1922. See D.M.P, 3 March 1922.

45. See S.M.Taifoor in A City, 79-82; Kamruddin Ahmad, Banglar Madhyabitter Atmabikash, Part II, (Dacca, 1975), 121-122. (hereafter Atmabikash). See also Thacker's Indian Directory (Mofussil Stations), 1921. 122. Khwaja Muhammad Azam was the vice-chairman of the district board at the time. He was also an Honorary Magistrate. So was Khwaja Azizullah. See page 121 of the Directory (hereafter T.I.D); T.I.D, 1923, 122; 1930, 140, 1937-38, 99; 1940-41 (Civil Divisions), 17.

46. For Khwaja Afzal see S.M.Taifoor in A City, 82 and for Khwaja Nazimuddin, interview with Begum Tahera Kabir in Dacca, 28 January 1977.

47. Haider recorded Dhirendra Chandra Roy as the vice-chairman of Dacca Municipality in 1916. See Haider in A City, 132.

47A. See Haider, Place Names, 42.

48. Of the elected members three were from Ward 1, which had the largest population. Wards 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 had two members each and Ward 6, which had the smallest number of people, elected one commissioner for itself. The 1921 Census Report gave a detailed analysis of the population structure and communal composition of these seven wards. See Census of India, 1921, vol.V, part I, 109.

50. This was not unique to Dacca. Party politics were absent in many towns at municipal level. Politics at this level are still centred round personalities and wealth rather than parties. See Sharda Basrao, Municipal Government in Rajasthan (New Delhi , 1975),291.
In Dacca during our period, and perhaps previously also, some votes could certainly be bought for money and so the wealthy merchant and landowning classes were better represented than the professional classes. See Shonar Bangla, 22 May, 1923, 9. Another advantage of the merchants' class was that they had more leisure than other occupational groups. See Sharda Basrao, 291. This advantage was shared by the landowners.

51. Allah Bux received 807 votes and K.M.Afzal received 691. See Dhaka Prokash, 25 November 1923, 3; 2 December 1923, 3.

52. Dhaka Prokash, 25 November 1923, 3.

53. Ibid., 2 December 1923, 3.

54. Ibid., 11 October 1923, 3.

55. Dhaka Prokash, 8 July 1923, 3.

56. Ibid., 2 September 1923, 3.

57. See D.M.P, 3 March 1922.

58. Dhaka Prokash, 16 September 1923. For local government's power to remove commissioners see Act III of 1884, section 19, p. 15 and Act XV of 1932, section 62, p. 30.

59. D.M.P., 14 and 15 September 1923.
See also Dhaka Prokash, 16 September 1923, 3.

60. Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee, A Nation in Making (London, 1925), 259.

Surendra Nath's long debated Calcutta Municipal Bill, introduced in 1922, was enacted in 1923 (after 18 months). It cut the franchise qualification by half and the number of elected members increased from two-thirds to four-fifths. The scope for official interference was 'strictly limited'. See Tinker, The Foundations, 130.

61. Tinker, 130.
The Bill did provide that separate electorates would be replaced by reservation of seats after nine years, but when the Bengal Municipal Act was passed in 1932 it enshrined the communalist principle of general electorates. Although Surendra Nath's propositions only applied to Calcutta Corporation, this Bill was important for the mofussil municipalities also, because it had paved the way for the passage of the Bengal Municipal Act of 1932. This broadened the franchise in Dacca in 1933 when the Act was extended to the city, though the electorate remained joint. See A.A.R.D.M., 1932 - 33, 1.

62. Tinker, 181 ; Interview with Begum Tahera Kabir in Dacca, 28 January 1977 .

63. Quoted in Haider in A City, 81.

64. Dhaka Prokash, 13 February 1924, 1; See also Dacca University's Convocation Address, (by Lord Lytton), 12 February 1924 (hereafter D.U.C.A).

65. A.A.R.D.M., 1924-25, 1-2; See also Shonar Bangla, 22 January 1924, 5.

66. D.M.P., 15 January 1924.

67. Ibid.

68. D.M.P., 16 February 1927.

69. Ibid; D.M.P., 1 February 1928

70. A.A.R.D.M., 1920-21, File 46, Form I;
1926-27, File 52, Form I;
1930-31, File 56, Form I.
The average of official and non-official members' attendance, however, varied from year to year.

71. See for example Z. Ahmed, 'Education in Bengal, 1912 - 37;' M.A. Rahim, History of the University of Dacca; Calcutta University Commission Report, vols I, IV, IX.

72. See Broomfield, 195, 238.

73. B.A.R., 1926-27, 20.

74. Broomfield, 276-277; Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 73.

75. Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 73.

76. The Address of Welcome given to Mrs Sarojini Naidu by the vice-chairman on behalf of the commissioners of Dacca Municipality, Dacca, 18 May 1926 (hereafter, D.A.W).

77. D.A.W. to Pandit Modan Mohan Malaviya by the chairman, Dacca, 4 July 1926. The address said 'properly interpreted and rightly controlled, the Sangathan and the Tanzeem will be constructive forces of incalculable potency, preparing the ground for that ultimate unification of interests between the two sister communities without which the political emancipation of India, will remain impossible of achievement'.

78. See D.A.W. to Rabindra Nath Tagore by the commissioners of Dacca Municipality, Dacca, 7 Feb. 1926. See also R.C. Majumdar, Jibaner Smritidipe (picture of poet with date between pp. 82 - 83; D.M.P., 20 Dec., 1925; Rafiqul Islam, 'Rabindra Nath O Purba Pakistan' in Anisuzzaman (ed), Rabindranath (Dacca, 1968), 483.

79. D.M.P, 1 February 1928.

80. Ibid.

81. Khwaja Afzal's diary, 15 April 1930; see also Haider in A City, 99.

82. D.M.P, 1 February 1928.
The five other Muslim commissioners were Khwaja Afzal, Khan Bahadur Kazi Alauddin, Mvi Abul Hasanath, Abdul Jaffar Ansari and Mvi Abdul Aziz.

83. Jagoran, 1st Year, Second issue, 1928 (Jaistha, 1335), 75 (free translation).

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid, 76, 77.

86. Khwaja Afzal's diary, 15 April 1930.

Despite this blow, Khwaja Afzal stayed on in municipal politics. Nazimuddin, however, crossed beyond the narrow boundary of Dacca Municipality and entered the larger arena of provincial politics, first as the Education Minister in December 1929 and then in 1930 he became the Home Minister. His loyalty to his own community was questioned during his chairmanship of Dacca Municipality, while later in the forties during his Chief Ministership, in Bengal, the Hindu Mahashabhaite Shyama Prasad Mukherjea declared 'Hindus of Bengal have no confidence in your Ministry'. He was also criticized by the radical Muslim politicians for his traditionalism, 'intellectual drabness and sterility'. But the government did not fail to take notice, as Kazi Ahmed Kamal comments, of his khandan (pedigree). He was raised to as high an office as was possible - first made a minister and then knighted. See Kazi Ahmed Kamal, Politicians and Inside Stories

(Dacca, 1970), 115. For Mukherjea's quotation see Broomfield, 311. See also Penderel Moon (ed), Wavell The Viceroy's journal (Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1974), 296. The government was so sure of Nazimuddin's loyalty that they did not want to lose him for any other Muslim.

87. Jagoran, Dacca, 3rd year, 1930, (Chaitra, 1337), 53.

88. See Broomfield, 302.

89. Ibid, 303. By 1934 the back of the civil disobedience movement had been broken, many moderates disapproving the trend towards violence, and the Muslims standing aloof or supporting government. See Broomfield, 303.

90. B.L.A.P., 1930, Vol. IV, 7 July - 18 July, 387.

See also Khwaja Afzal's diary, 24 May 1930.

91. B.L.A.P., 1930, vol IV, 7 July to 18 July 567.

92. Ibid., 573.

93. Ibid., 575.
Dhaka Prakash 26 August 1923, 3, mentioned S.C.Chatterjee as vice-chairman of Dacca Khilafat Committee and also a member of Congress. Both S.C.Chatterjee and P.K.Bose were lawyers.
See Thacker's Indian Directory (Bengal Civil Divisions) 1940-41, 19.

94. B.L.A.P., 1930, vol IV., 7 July to 18 July 577.
See Broomfield, 284-85.

95. Ibid, 577 and 598. 49 votes were against the motion and 29 were for it. Among the 'foes', there was only one Muslim - from Burma. But among the 'Noes' there was a number of Hindus.

96. See A.A.R.D.M., 1930-31, 1-2.
Another incident took place in Dacca in 1930 as The Bengalee, Calcutta, 30 August, 1930 reported: F.J.Lowman, Inspector General of Police, Bengal, and E.Hodson, Superintendent of Police, Dacca, were shot at in the Mitford Hospital Compound by a Hindu medical student on 30 August of that year. The incident, which the Bengalee called a 'terrorist outrage' and the Dacca Bar Association and Calcutta Corporation a 'dastardly outrage', caused horror and aversion among moderates towards agitational politics. Lowman died of his injury on 31 August. See The Bengalee, 2 September 1930. Since Sarkar had terrorist links, the shooting of these police officers must have united the moderates on the board even more against him.

97. A.A.R.D.M., 1930-31, 1. See also The Bangalee, 16 August 1930, 5-6. An election was held again on 13 April and the election of the chairman and vice-chairman took place on 9 August. S.C.Sarkar did not come to this special election meeting of the Board and Pyarilal Das was elected chairman in the absence of Sarkar who did not recognize Pyarilal's victory and claimed to be the chairman of the Municipality for sometime.

98. See B.A.R., 1924-25, 33; 1930-31, 47.
See A.A.R.D.M., 1920-21, 1.

Under Acts XXXIX of 1920 and XV of 1932, a defeated candidate for commissionership could challenge the election results in a law court and until the case was decided upon by the court, that seat could not be filled by the newly elected member. See chapter III sections 36, 37, 38, pp. 22 - 23 of the 1932 Act.

99. A.A.R.D.M, 1920-21 1; B.A.R, 1924-25, 33; D.M.B, 21 June 1928; A.A.R.D.M, 1930-31, 1, 16.

100. B.A.R, 1930-31, 47.

101. Broomfield, 284-85.

102. The Act XV of 1932, chapter VIII, sections 280-285, pp.118-120.

103. The 1931 Census drew attention to the vital political significance of communal numbers. As the editor of the 1931 census report noted, neither Hindus nor Muslims 'could fail to be alive to the importance in Bengal of the numerical strength of his co-religionists in view of the impending constitutional changes and the question of communal electorates. Numerous allegations were made on both sides during the process of enumeration that enumerators of one community were suppressing details of persons of the other community and fictitiously increasing the numbers of their own'.
See Census of India, 1931, vol V. part 1, 384.

104. The Star of India, Calcutta, 19 January 1933, 4.
The three lawyers were Abdul Latif Biswas BL, A.F.Nurunnabi BL. and Badruddin Ahmed BL.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid.

107. The Star of India, 9 February 1933, 6.

108. Ibid.

109 Ibid., 14 February 1933, 4-5.

Muslims were somewhat dubious about the joint electorate system in local self-government. But the Hindus in general were very strongly opposed to any communal electorate which they justifiably called 'undemocratic'. Although the Act of 1932 did not do away with the joint electorate system in many municipalities, particularly in Dacca, the system still remained undemocratic because the ex-officio members were still there. In Dacca they were normally two at this stage, although they hardly attended any meeting of the Municipality unless specially requested. Besides, the system of nomination still existed which also undermined democratic principles. The numbers of commissioners elected under the Act of 1932 as against those under 1884 were as follows:

No. of Wards	No. of Commissioners
i	3
ii	2
iii	3 (2 under 1884 Act)
iv	3 (2 under 1884 Act)
v	2
vi	2 (1 under 1884 Act)
vii	2

See Bengal Local Self-Government Proceedings, April 1935, 185 (hereafter B.L.S.P.).

110. A.A.R.D.M., 1933 - 34, 1 - 2.

The reason why the electorate still remained small was mainly economic. After 1931 there was a dramatic fall of upto 50 per cent in prices - which must have cut agricultural incomes and stunted trade and commerce. Wage freezes were also imposed on employees by government. Lowering of the municipal tax rate for eligibility to vote, therefore, did not in practice mean that more people were enfranchized in a situation where incomes were falling faster than the municipal rates.

111. A.A.R.D.M., 1932-33, 1-2; B.L.S.P, 1935, 185.

112. Shanti, Dacca, 6th year, 9th issue, 1932, 352.

It had been banned in 1932 under No. 4 Ordinance of the Governor in Council. The Dacca District Congress Committee had organised boycotts of foreign goods and had links with the Sri Sangha, Bani Sangha and Shivaji Sangha, the Gandaria Women's Association and the Republican Party - all of them were regarded by government as terrorist organisations.

113. Jagoran, 2 April 1933.

114. See appendix 9 for the list of the vice-chairmen of Dacca Municipality. In the 1933 elections also Abul Hasanath stood for vice-chairman again against another Nawab family member - Nawabzada Nasrullah. This time, however, he was defeated by the latter who polled sixteen votes while the Moulvi got only five. See The Calcutta Municipal Gazette, Calcutta, 24 June 1933, 215 (hereafter C.M.G.).

In 1938, the Moulvi defeated the Nawabzada and secured the vice-chairmanship of the Municipality. A.A.R.D.M, 1938-39, 1.

115. Interview with Hafizuddin Ahmed, Dacca, 15 January 1977. D.M.P., 5 April 1945.

116. See Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 18.

117. Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, 29-30; Broomfield, 291; Humaira Momen, 'The Krishak Praja Party and the Bengal Provincial Election, 1937' (MA. Dissertation at the University of Sussex, 1969), 49-50.

117A. It was Narayanganj East Rural Muhammadam Constituency. There were nine candidates for one seat. See The Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary, 21 December 1936, 364-365

118. See the Bengal Legislative Assembly's membership list for 1937 in Indian Annual Register, 1937, vol I, 149 (hereafter I.A.R.).

119. See D.M.P, 28 October 1942, 4; 21 June 1943, 1; and 30 March 1944, 1.

120. Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, 33.

121. J.D.Tyson, the then District Magistrate of Dacca, noted that by not joining with the Khwaja Nazimuddin group, Fazlul Huq was splitting the Muslims in Bengal, much to the satisfaction of the Hindus. See Tyson Collection , 31 January 1937, 2.

Fazlul Huq explained to the Dacca University students why he had refused to join forces with the League - denouncing it as an association of non-Bengalis, the Ispahanis and Mahmudabads, representing Calcutta commercial interests and members of the Dacca Nawab family which ignored the true Bengali Muslims, the peasants and intelligentsia. See Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, 33-34.

122. However, Fazlul Huq formed his coalition with the League in February, 1937 but to sustain the League's support joined the Muslim League later in October. See The Star of India, February 13, 15, 17 and 24 1937. See Broomfield, 296.

123. Broomfield, 295. For Fazlul Huq's cabinet in 1937 see also Shila Sen, 'Muslim Bengal Politics' in Bangladesh Historical Studies, vol. I, 1976, 30-40.

For the Nawab Bahadur's taking over local self-government portfolio see also Governor Lord Brabourne's report no.22 to Linlithgow in Viceroy's correspondence with the Governor of Bengal and his Secretary, 15 August to December 1938, vol. II. , 96.
See also Governor's Reports, Bengal, July-December 1938, 7.

In 1941 another cabinet was formed and the Nawab of Dacca became the Minister for Agriculture, Industries, Commerce and Labour and Santosh Kumar Basu became the Minister for Public Health, Local Self-Government and Civil Defence. See I.A.R, 1942, vol. I., 2.

124. Tyson Collection, 7 February 1937, 2.

Politics were not party or policy based in Calcutta Corporation either. Sanat Kumar Roy Choudhury, the Mayor of Calcutta Corporation, appealed to the politicians in 1938 not to fight elections on the question of personality and factions which invariably obstructed good municipal administration.
See C.M.G, Jan - June 1938, 408.

125. Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 78;
The Star of India, 16 September, 1938, 7.

125A. His powerlessness in this context does not prove that ministerial interference in municipal politics was uncommon at the time. See Governor's Reports, Bengal, 17 June (Jan - June), 1938, 7-8. (Brabourne to Linlithgow).

126. See Cuttings from the Times, 23 November 1943 (1942-46), 137.

The Times noted the 'remarkable effort' of the all-party relief committee in Dacca during the famine. During the riots of Dacca also the leaders of Hindu and Muslim communities worked together in peace committees. Interview with Qazi Motahar Hossain, Dacca,
Even in the last and more violent phase of communal riots in 1946 peace committees in Dacca had both Hindu and Muslim members working together. See Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 75.

127. Khwajas Nasrullah and Shahabuddin, for example, were from the Muslim League, Birendra Nath Majumdar and Monoranjan Banerjee were Swarajists and S.K.Das and K.C.Banerjee were from the Congress.

128. See Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary, 30 December 1936, 353; I.A.R, 1937, vol. I, 148. D.M.P, 28 February 1945.

See Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary, 30 December 1936, 535; I.A.R, 1937, vol. I, 148; 1938, vol. II, 118, Mr. Ibrahim represented Independent Proja Party in B.L.A; D.Roy entered Municipal Politics in 1938 as a nominated member, and Ibrahim was elected in 1941. See C.M.G, 4 June 1938, 12; D.M.P, 21 May 1941; 23 July 1941; 22 December 1941.

129. Broomfield, 295.

130. D.M.P, 21 May 1941; 23 July 1941; 28 October 1942, 4.

131. D.M.P, 28 February 1945, 2-3.

S.K.Das got seven votes, Bimalananda got 12 and Saheb-e-Alam pocketed 12 votes against Abul Hasanath who got 9.

132. For Fazlul Huq's removal from power in March 1943 see N.Mansergh, The Transfer of Power 1942-47 (London, 1971), vol. III, 875. See also M.K.U.Molla, 'A.K.Fazlul Huq: An Account of His Ministry, 1941-43' in Bangladesh Historical Studies, 89-90.

133. After Fazlul Huq's resignation, the following Ministry was formed by Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin which was backed by the Europeans, the Muslim League and a number of scheduled caste members as well. See Broomfield, 310.

134. See The Bangalee, 26 August 1930, 6.

135. See Tyson Collection, 31 January 1937, 2.

136. Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, 62 .

137 Governor's Reports, Bengal, 20 June, Jan-June 1939, 8.

138. Ibid., 9.

139. Ibid.

140. Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, 62.
In the election over the executive posts in Dacca District Muslim League held on 24 September, 1944, the Dacca Nawab family lost its hold to 'the commoners'.

141. Ibid., 63

142. Kamruddin Ahmad, Bengal, 62-65;
Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 18.
Before Partition, however, Abul Hasanath, along with many other Muslim politicians, joined the Khwajas Shahabuddin - Nazimuddin group of the Muslim League. See Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 78.

143. Tyson Collection, 13 December 1936, 2.

144. D.M.P., 5 April 1945, 6-7.
The names of the opposition members are as follows:

Rai S.K.Das Bahadur, Khan Bahadur Moulvi Abul Hasanath Ahmed, Dr M.G.Ryack, Dr S.K.Sen, D.N.Banerjee, P.C.Ghose, B.N.Bose, H.K.Das, Zulfikar Khan.

145. D.M.P., 5 April 1945, 6.
The chairman's party consisted of the following:

Bimalananda Das Gupta (chairman), Syed Saheb-e-Alam (vice-chairman), Nuruddin Ahmed, T.N.Das, S.B.Datta, Moti Sardar, Mirza Abdul Kader Sardar, Hakim Habibur Rahman and Dr B.B.Das.

146. D.M.P., 5 April 1945, 7.

147. Kamruddin Ahmad, Atmabikash, 73.

148. D.M.P, 12 March 1945, 1 - 2.

149. An overwhelming majority of the municipal staff in our period was from the Hindu community. The secretary, Health Officer, Engineer, accountants, clerks and the sweepers were Hindus mainly. Only during the last phase of our period did a Muslim Health Officer join the Municipality. A few tahsildars (tax collectors) and a conservancy supervisor or jamadar, the Mullahs of the burial grounds and kasai khanas (slaughter houses) were Muslims. Thacker's Indian Directory recorded some of the staff during our period - all of them except the Muslim Health Officer, A.N.Khan, who joined in 1942, were Hindus.
See T.I.D.,(Mofussil Stations), 1929, 116; 1925, 131; 1930,141; 1936, 97; (Bengal Civil Divisions), 1940-41, 18; 1944-45, 10-11.
See also B.E.D.M, 1927-28, 26-27; 1941-42, 56,58. See also Satyen Sen, 122-24.

150. See D.M.P., 30 April 1941, 2-3; D.M.P, 23 July 1941, 1; 21 June 1943, 1.

151. Chabuk, 6 March 1945, 23.
For the riots in Dacca, see B.L.A.P., 15 July - 19 September 1940, vol LVII, 224-225; Dhaka Prokash, 26 April 1942, 2; 28 March 1943, 2; Report from S.G.Taylor, Inspector General of Police, Bengal to P.D.Martyn, Special Officer, Home Department, 2 January 1946.

152. See Haider, Place Names, 28-39.

153. During our period no road was named after any European. But a large number of commissioners and their relations managed to engrave their names on the public roads.
See for example, D.M.P, 3 May 1921; 23 August 1921; 6 September 1921; 18 November 1921; 1 February 1922; 23 November 1922; 15 January 1924; 15 May 1924; 17 May 1927; 18 January 1928; 28 October 1942; 19 January 1943.

154. D.M.P., 23 April 1923; See also Haider, Place Names, 45.

155. Haider, Place Names, 42.

156. Ibid, 12-13.

157. The Dacca Gazette Extraordinary, 19 November 1947.

Conclusion

British rulers acted as agents or catalysts of change in the civic and political life of Dacca from the nineteenth century. The changes they proposed met with varying degrees of acceptance from the inhabitants of the city. Western forms of city government and civic amenity were all initially largely of concern to existing elites, both Hindu and Muslim. But during our period these elites, who governed and administered the city, themselves became agents in spreading western ideas and values through other strata of Indian society. The practical benefits of an improving municipality - pure water, lighting, regular waste disposal, paved roads, open spaces - were provided by the municipal government with a very unequal hand. But the demand for such amenities spread quite rapidly among the whole population and though in many crowded quarters the street standpipe rather than the house connection was the only form in which the water distribution system could reach the people, this was a boon readily accepted and eagerly demanded. Medical authorities, in proposing a water-works, might look mainly to freedom from the diseases carried by the contaminated water of the khals and wells, but for the women of Dacca the arrival of the water mains represented relief from unending and heavy physical effort.

Few scruples inhibited acceptance of such boons as piped water and electricity, and the munificence of the Nawab family meant that Dacca citizens did not have to pay the full economic costs of providing them. Some other aspects of municipal reform,

however, were at first rejected, often by all strata of society, and represented an imposition of alien values: municipal organization of sewage disposal, with the closure of pit latrines and other sanitary regulations, the vaccination of children and measures to control contagious diseases, together with the imposition of formal planning regulations upon the natural process of house building and street development - all of these met with resistance because the individual benefit was hard to see or because they clashed with traditional cultural values, such as the privacy of the women's quarters of the house. Yet these innovations too won considerable acceptance eventually. Interviews with Mohammed Rostam Miah, son of an old mahalla sardar, and such humble people as Ratan Mandal, a washerman of old Dacca, Lakshmi, a municipal sweepress, and Moizuddin, a Kutti butcher of Dacca New Market, showed that despite their lack of education they all accepted many municipal innovations without reservation. Instead of using whatever water was locally available, they queued as a matter of course for filtered water from the standpipe and instead of maintaining a fatalistic attitude towards disease, or relying upon religious precautions such as offerings to Sitla or the wearing of an amulet, they have accepted vaccination and inocculation.[1]

How far the municipal institutions devised by British officials provided that training in self-government envisaged by Lord Ripon, or elicited that sense of civic pride and civic duty to which local officials paid homage on public occasions, is not at all certain. The sense of civic pride has doubtless everywhere revealed on closer inspection an odd mixture of

public spirit and personal self-seeking, whether in terms of advantage, profit, power over others or satisfied self-importance: there would be little difficulty in demonstrating their presence among the commissioners of Dacca Municipality. But the duties of a municipal chairman required a very great commitment of time and energy, for which some reward in honour, power and profit was certainly appropriate. When so much civic improvement had to be wrought against the social grain, a Rai Bahadurship and other evidence of official approval were perhaps necessary to sustain the morale of those who were cast as agents of modernization. It is clear that many men of already established social reputation and local power were willing to seek election or hold municipal office, sometimes as a stepping stone to the provincial level of politics, more often as an end in itself. There was some increase in the number of middle class professional men, but these often came from families which also had zamindari or merchant status, and it would be hard to draw clear-cut party lines among them or, until quite late in the period, to demonstrate any absolute communal divide. Municipal office-holding was thus a new arena in which old competitions and rivalries could take place. The interesting question - not easily answered from the written records available - is how far older sources of prestige and influence retained their importance, and what value the citizens of Dacca - if there was an identifiable citizenry - placed upon the roles, new and old, which the leaders played. Was a year spent as vice-chairman of the municipal board, election to the Court of the University, or the funding of an extension of the water mains a more effective and appreciated investment of resources than service on a madrassah committee

or a lavish demonstration of a Durga Puja or a sradha?[2] Again, Khwaja Azam recorded the existence of an indigenous civic structure of mahalla sardars under the Nawabs' overall leadership in the nineteenth century[3] and the election of mahalla sardars to the municipal board in 1945 indicates that the system still had some importance in our period. But experience since Independence suggests that the functions of mahalla sardars, who disappeared altogether in the 1960s, were gradually being superseded by the Municipality.[4]

The various ideas which grew up and developments which took place in Dacca during our period undoubtedly affected traditional attitudes towards many aspects of city life, such as the role of women, the importance of caste and the value of institutional leadership in modernizing the environment. A further study of the impact of western innovations on post-Independence Dacca society would be extremely useful. The details of these changes, however, are not most clearly revealed through written records, although additional private papers, if they could be traced, would help to fill some of the gaps: even more productive would be a programme of interviews with Dacca citizens, on a larger scale than was possible for this thesis.

Notes and References

1. Interviews with Lakshmi, Ratan Mandal and Mohammad Rostam Miah Sardar in Dacca, 20 December 1976, 20 January 1977 and 30 January 1977 respectively.

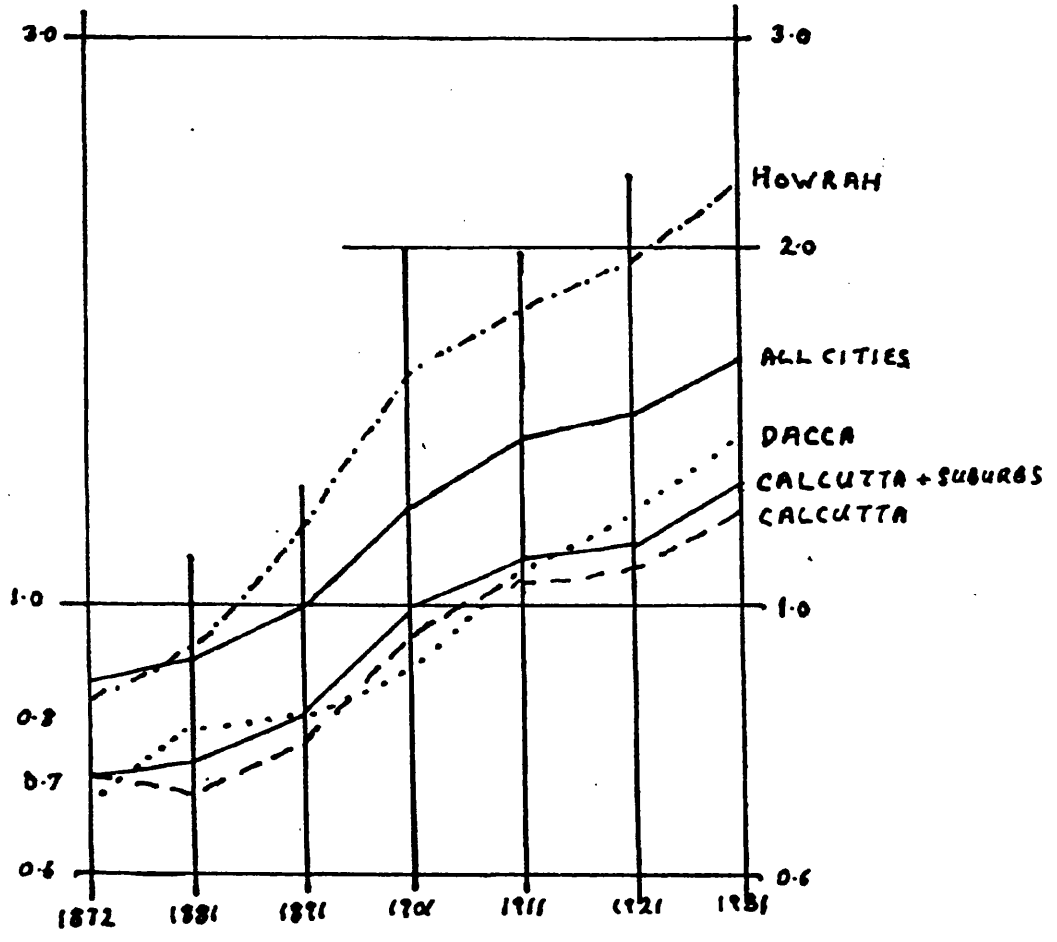
2. The Herald, 3 February 1923, for example, recorded a 'Mahotshav' in Dacca where thousands of beggars were sumptuously fed by Rai Bahadur Sailendra Nath Banerji.

3. For details see Khan Saheb Khwaja Mahomed Azam, The Panchayet System of Dacca. See also Census of India, 1911, V, i, 493 - 494.

4. Interview with Mohammad Rostam Miah Sardar, 30 January 1977.

Appendix I

A diagram illustrating the changes in the population of Bengal cities at each census, 1872 - 1931



Scale in hundreds of thousands for Howrah and Dacca.
Scale in millions for Calcutta with suburbs and Calcutta.

Source: Adapted from Census of India, 1931, vol. V, part i.

Appendix 2

Major diseases and their toll in some urban centres of Bengal:

1921

	Population	Cholera	Smallpox	Fever	Dysentery & Diarrhoea	Respiratory Disease	Total deaths from all causes
Dacca City	119,450	162 (1.4)	3 (.03)	1,509 (12.6)	272 (2.3)	316 (2.6)	3,485 (29.2)
Narayanganj Town	30,604	77 (2.5)	9 (.3)	271 (8.9)	76 (2.4)	48 (1.6)	779 (25.5)
Calcutta	907,851	1,997 (2.2)	89 (.1)	3,908 (4.3)	3,151 (3.5)	10,233 (11.3)	30,395 (33.5)
Howrah	195,301	564 (2.9)	73 (.4)	1,754 (9.0)	1,095 (5.6)	1,665 (8.5)	6,887 (35.3)

Source: B.P.H.R, 1921,
Appendix I, XVI, XVII, XX and XXI .

Figures in B.P.H.R. do not always correspond with those in A.A.R.D.M, which have been quoted in the body of the text; they have been used in this table to enable comparison to be made between the major urban centres of Bengal.
Figures in brackets indicate deaths per thousand of the population.

Appendix 3

Major diseases and their toll in some urban centres of Bengal:

1925

	*Population	Cholera	Smallpox	Fever	Dysentery & Diarrhoea	Respiratory Disease	Total deaths from all causes
Dacca City	119,450	36 (.3)	1 (.01)	931 (7.8)	355 (2.9)	727 (6.1)	3,259 (27.3)
Narayanganj Town	30,604	33 (1.1)	16 (.5)	313 (10.2)	85 (2.7)	49 (1.6)	894 (29.2)
Calcutta	907,851	996 (.9)	3,923 (3.6)	5,453 (5.1)	3,132 (2.9)	9,872 (9.2)	35,195 (32.7)
Howrah	195,301	228 (1.2)	865 (4.4)	1,083 (5.5)	761 (3.9)	1,785 (9.1)	6,591 (33.7)

* population is based on the census of 1921.

Source: B.P.H.R, 1925,
Appendix I, XVI - XVII, XX and XXI.

Figures in brackets indicate deaths per thousand of the population.

Appendix 4

Major diseases and their toll in some urban centres in Bengal:

1931

	Population	Cholera	Smallpox	Fever	Dysentery & Diarrhoea	Respiratory Disease	Total deaths from all causes
Dacca City	13,518	220 (1.6)	2 (.01)	407 (2.9)	448 (3.3)	948 (6.8)	3,356 (24.2)
Narayanganj Town	34,189	118 (3.4)	..	214 (6.3)	86 (2.5)	30 (.9)	893 (26.1)
Calcutta	1,196,734	1,235 (1.0)	891 (.7)	3,490 (2.9)	2,958 (2.4)	9,765 (8.2)	30,562 (25.5)
Howrah	224,873	208 (.9)	667 (3.0)	327 (1.4)	1,033 (4.5)	2,056 (9.1)	6,253 (27.8)

Source: B.P.H.R., 1931, 167 - 175.

Figures in brackets indicate deaths per thousand of the population.

Appendix 5

Major diseases and their toll in some urban centres in Bengal:

1935

	Population	Cholera	Smallpox	Fever	Dysentery & Diarrhoea	Respiratory Disease	Total deaths from all causes
Dacca City	138,518	81 (.6)	139 (1.0)	263 (1.9)	233 (1.6)	1,113 (8.0)	3,127 (22.6)
Narayanganj Town	34,189	15 (.4)	..	190 (5.5)	53 (1.6)	51 (1.5)	696 (20.4)
Calcutta	140,862	2,116 (1.8)	1,173 (1.0)	4,235 (3.7)	2,571 (2.2)	9,514 (8.3)	(29.9)
Howrah	224,873	464 (2.1)	208 (.9)	354 (1.6)	1,344 (5.9)	1,975 (8.8)	(30.5)

Source: Annual Report of the Sanitary Board, Bengal, 1935.
pp. 190 - 191, 196 - 197, and 198 - 199.
Figures in brackets indicate deaths per thousand of the population.

Appendix 6

Major diseases and their toll in some urban centres of Bengal:

1941

	Population	Cholera	Smallpox	Fever	Dysentery & Diarrhoea	Respiratory Disease	Total deaths from all causes
Dacca City	138,518	33 (.2)	10 (.1)	563 (4.1)	259 (1.9)	572 (4.1)	2,688
Narayanganj Town	34,189	61 (1.8)	4 (.1)	271 (7.9)	57 (1.7)	24 (.7)	874
Calcutta	1,140,862	1,737 (1.5)	4,545 (4.0)	3,162 (2.8)	2,849 (2.5)	8,963 (7.9)	36,176
Howrah	224,873	617 (2.7)	344 (1.5)	368 (1.6)	917 (4.1)	2,149 (9.6)	7,267

Source: B.P.H.R., 1941, 80 - 91.

Figures in brackets indicate deaths per thousand of the population.

Appendix 7

Retail Prices of Rice in Dacca Sadar
1921 - 1946

	Seers of common rice per rupee
1921	6.75
1926	5.5
1931	8.5
1936	11.5
1941	6.5
1943	3.25
1946	2.7

Sources

Supplement to the Calcutta Gazette, 16 February 1921, 352.
------ , 11 February 1926, 104.
------ , 12 February 1931, 268.
------ , 13 February 1936, 176.
------ , 31 July 1941, 1202*.
------ , 18 February 1943, 107.
------ , 21 February 1946, 48.

*February edition of the 1941 Supplement not available in London or Dacca.

Appendix 8

Basic Education in Dacca City

1921 - 1941

Number of school-going children (aged 5 - 10 years) in Dacca City and primary schools aided and maintained by Dacca Municipality.

		1921	1931	1941
Total population of the city		119,450+	138,518	213,218
Total number of school-going children (5-10 years)		15,482	16,207	25,586
Male children (5-10 years)		7,805	8,917	---**
Female children (5-10 years)		7,672	7,290	---**
Literate children (5-10 years)	i. Boys	1,728	2,703	---**
	ii. Girls	898	1,908	---**
Number of schools aided by Municipality*	i. Boys	32	32	51
	ii. Girls	12	12	25
	iii. Total	54	54	76
Number of schools directly maintained by Municipality	i. Boys	---	3	17
	ii. Girls	---	---	11
	iii. Total	---	3	28

*These schools do not include special aided schools such as orphanage schools, tols, night schools, madrassahs and asram schools.

+The population of Dacca city for 1921 includes 9,017 males and 533 females of Dacca cantonment and Ramna civil station.

**These figures were not available in the 1941 Census Report.

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Census of India, 1921, vol. V, part ii, 68.
Census of India, 1931, vol. V, part ii, 175.
Census of India, 1941, vol. IV, 18.
A.A.R.D.M., 1920 - 21, 1930 - 31, 1940 - 41.

Appendix 9

Chairmen of Dacca Municipality
1921 - 1947

1. Nawab Khwaja Mohammad Yousuff Jan Bahadur, 1919 - 1922 (third term).

2. Khwaja Nazimuddin (later Sir Nazimmuddin), 1922 - 1929.

3. Satish Chandra Sarkar, 1930.

4. Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das, 1930 - 1933 (second term).

5. Rai Bahadur Satyendra Kumar Das, 1933 - 1938.

6. Birendra Nath Majumdar, 1938 - 1940.

7. Rai Bahadur Satyendra Kumar Das, 1940 - 1945 (second term).

8. Bimalanda Das Gupta, 1945 - 1947.

Source: D.M.P., 1919 - 1947.

Appendix 10

Vice-Chairmen of Dacca Municipality 1921 - 1947

1. Dhirendra Chandra Roy, 1919 - 1922.
2. Keshab Chandra Banerjee, 1922 - 1930.
3. Satyendra Kumar Das, 1930.
4. Moulvi Abul Hasanath Ahmed, 1930 - 1933.
5. Nawabzada Khwaja Nasrullah, 1933 - 1938.
6. Moulvi Abul Hasanath Ahmed, 1938 - 1945 (second term).
7. Khwaja Saheb-e-Alam, 1945 - 1947.

Source: D.M.P., 1919 - 1947.

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J. INTERVIEWS IN DACCA, 1976 - 1977

Begum Tahera Kabir (a member of the Dacca Nawab family), 28 January 1977.

Din Mohammad (mason for generations), 4 October 1976.

Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, B.A. (ex-government servant and former Minister), 15 January 1977.

Hafizur Rahman Choudhury, B.A., B.L. (ex-District Sub Registrar), 7 and 9 February 1977.

Hakim Irtiazur Rahman (son of Hakim Habibur Rahman), 30 January 1977.

Jhulan Barui (originally milkman, presently jeweller, New Market), 4 February 1977.

Kalish Chandra Roy (jewellers for three generations, presently goldsmith), 19 February 1977.

Kshirode Lal Roy, M.A., L.L.B. (ex-pleader, Dacca Bar; former student, Dacca University), 14 January 1977.

Lakshmi (Methrani) (sweeperess of Dacca Municipality), 20 December 1976.

Mirza Kayum Ali Khan (a descendant of Nawab Shaista Khan), 30 January 1977.

Mirza Roushan Ali (a descendant of Nawab Shaista Khan), 30 January 1977.

Mohammad Ali Akbar (record peon, Dacca Municipality), 5 February 1977.

Mohammad Hamid Miah(ex-record peon, Dacca Municipality), 26 January and 12 February 1977.

Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, M.A. (ex-government servant), 6 February 1977.

Mohammad Moizuddin (butcher), 4 February 1977.

Mohammad Najibur Rahman (ex-grocer), 14 February 1977.

Mohammad Rostam Miah Sardar (son of Yousuff Sardar, Mahalla Sardar of Gopibagh), 30 January and 5 February 1977.

Mohammad Zakaria (record keeper, Dacca Municipality), 20 January 1977.

Moulvi Ahmadullah, I. Com. (owner of printing business), 20 January 1977.

(Dr.) Najmul Karim (ex-Professor of Sociology and ex-student, Dacca University), 28 January 1977.

Narayan Chandra Shaha, M.A., B.T. (lecturer, Jagannath College), 30 January 1977.

(Dr.) Quazi Motahar Hussain (ex-Professor of Physics and ex-student, Dacca University; National Professor, Bangladesh), 28 January and 2 February 1977.

Ratan Mandal (washerman in front of Ahsan Manzil), 20 January 1977.

Sardar Fazlul Karim (Assistant Professor, Dacca University), 17 February 1977.

Swami Akhyanananda (Mohanta of Ramkrishna Mission), 17 February 1977.

Syed Mohammad Jahangir (licence inspector, Dacca Municipality), 4 December 1976.

Tafazzal Hussain, M.A. (ex-government servant; ex-student, Dacca University), 17 January 1977.